Encounter

HENRY FAIRLIE

The B.B.C.

Voice of the Establishment

JACK KEROUAC
Beatific

COLIN MACINNES
Riot in September

ALFRED FABRE-LUCE
Chinese Journey

A. J. P. TAYLOR
Keeping It Dark

PAUL IGNOTUS
Exile in London

ROBERT LOWELL
Poems

Notes, Topics, Reviews

HILARY CORKE: **Famous Englishmen**
J. G. WEIGHTMAN: **Simone de Beauvoir**
PHILIP TOYNBEE: **George Orwell**
V. S. PRITCHETT: **Ulysses in Nighttown**

C. P. SNOW'S "TWO CULTURES"
Discussion by A. C. B. Lovell, Walter Allen, Sir John Cockcroft, Bertrand Russell, Michael Ayrton, J. H. Plumb, and David Riesman

AUGUST 1959 71 MONTHLY 3s.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's what's

behind

the money that matters

ALL BANKS, of course, deal with money. But they also provide many *services* – services beyond the routine ones of receiving credits and paying cheques.

We, in Lloyds Bank, believe in giving *full service*. We do not believe in limited banking in any shape or form. That is why we offer, at all branches of Lloyds Bank to all customers, a complete and comprehensive service at a modest and competitive cost.

Furthermore we lend money for business or personal needs at rates of interest linked to Bank Rate and charged on a day-to-day basis: there is no cheaper way of borrowing money.

We believe that our experience and knowledge, accumulated over a period of nearly 300 years, should be freely available to all customers – irrespective of the size of their accounts.

Consult the Manager of your nearest branch of Lloyds Bank – he is ready at all times to serve you. You will be surprised to find how little it costs to have a personal account at Lloyds Bank.

LLOYDS BANK
LIMITED

Over 1770 Offices in England and Wales

THE KENYON REVIEW

"... the best of the American literary quarterlies."
THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

In the current summer number

KENNETH BURKE *on* Tragedy
R. P. BLACKMUR *on* Edwin Muir
DENIS DONAGHUE *on* Yeats
LIONEL ABEL *on* Harold Rosenberg

and

Several book reviews
A selection of poetry
A new story by Peter Taylor

In numbers to come

A section of Robert Fitzgerald's new translation of *The Iliad*, Stallknecht on Wallace Stevens, Arnold Stein on *Antony and Cleopatra*, Paul West on Malraux, Philip Stratford on Mauriac, Kenneth Burke on Rieff, Blackmur on Matthew Prior, W. J. Handy on Faulkner.

THE KENYON REVIEW is published four times a year at Gambier, Ohio.

The price of a year's subscription is $ 4.00 (U.S.A.), $ 4.25 (Foreign).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Encounter

edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

AUGUST 1959. VOL. XIII. NO. 2

Published monthly at 25 Haymarket London SW1
3s. per number (USA and Canada 75c.) Postage per copy: Inland 6d., Foreign 4½d.
Yearly subscription (including postage) £2: USA and Canada $7.50: India 12 rupees
US and Canadian subscriptions may be entered at British Publications Inc.
30 East 60th Street New York 22. Second class mail privileges
authorised at New York, N.Y.

THE B.B.C. 7 *Henry Fairlie*

CHINESE JOURNEY 17 *Alfred Fabre-Luce*

IN SEPTEMBER 27 *Colin MacInnes*

KEEPING IT DARK 40 *A. J. P. Taylor*

EXILE IN LONDON 46 *Paul Ignotus*

BEATIFIC 57 *Jack Kerouac*

POETRY

AFTER PASTERNAK AND MONTALE 3 *Robert Lowell*

NOTES AND TOPICS

PING-PONG 62 *Constantine FitzGibbon*

IMMODERATE CRITICISM 62 *Donald Davie*

ULYSSES IN NIGHTTOWN 64 *V. S. Pritchett*

ADENAUER, AND THE OTHERS 65 *F. R. Allemann*

C. P. SNOW AND "THE TWO CULTURES" 67 *Walter Allen, A. C. B. Lovell, J. H. Plumb, David Riesman, Bertrand Russell, Sir John Cockcroft, Michael Ayrton*

BOOKS

PRAISING FAMOUS MEN 74 *Hilary Corke*

GROWING UP IN PARIS 77 *J. G. Weightman*

ORWELL'S PASSION 81 *Philip Toynbee*

FROM THE OTHER SHORE 83

LETTERS 84

AUTHORS 88

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Good Mornings' begin with 1,500 tons of very special steel

F. H. Happold, distinguished industrial journalist, finds a story behind his morning shave

A RAZOR BLADE weighs one-fortieth of an ounce. It is 4 to 5 thousandths of an inch thick.

Yet all the razor blades made in a year by the Gillette factory on the Great West Road, Middlesex, use up over 1,500 *tons* of very special steel strip – nearly 50,000 miles of it! Laid one on top of another, a year's output of blades would make a stack 25 times the height of Mount Everest.

Automatic machinery – covering acres of floor – punches, hardens, tempers, lacquers, prints, grinds, strops and hones the blades all day long. And the steel for this rapid continuous production must be as flawless as the finished blade. It must be absolutely uniform.

F. H. HAPPOLD *For most of his working life F. H. Happold has been a journalist writing mainly on economic, industrial and financial subjects.*

He has studied the British industrial scene from almost every angle over 25 years, and believes he recognises outstanding business efficiency when he comes across it.

At one time the supply of this special razor blade steel came from abroad. But a Stocksbridge steel firm tackled the job of producing it and quickly became master of the intricate technique.

NOW IT'S EARNING DOLLARS

Mr. J. F. Kayser, hard-headed North country Gillette metallurgist, was emphatic: "There's no better razor blade steel in the world than the special steel made in Britain."

So good is the British product that even in America the use of British razor blade steel is increasing, thus adding to our dollar earnings.

How is it done? In terms of plant, it meant brand new electric furnaces, rolling mills, instruments and so on, with new buildings to house them. It meant a major research effort. Above all, it called for the closest collaboration between experienced steelmakers and the experts in razor blade manufacture.

NOT JUST RAZOR BLADES...

The morning shave is but one of the thousands of ways in which special steels enter our daily lives. We use them in vacuum cleaners, washing machines, typewriters, motor cars, hair clips, needles and scissors – and a host of other everyday objects. Each one has probably called on the specialised knowledge and devotion of teams of technologists and skilled workers in both the steelmaking and manufacturing firms.

Britain needs the accumulated wisdom and diverse abilities of every one of her three hundred and more steel companies. Without their ready, informal co-operation with steel users, industrial progress would grind to a halt.

This personal report was invited by the British Iron & Steel Federation, which believes that everyone in Britain should know the facts about steel and about the men who make it.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Lowell

After Pasternak and Montale

In the Woods

A lilac heat was heavy on the meadow;
high in the wood, a cathedral's sharp, nicked groins.
No skeleton obstructed the bodies—
all was theirs, obsequious wax in their fingers.

Such, the dream:—you do not sleep,
you only dream you thirst for sleep,
that some one elsewhere thirsts for sleep—
two black suns singe his eyelashes.

Sunbeams flow, ebb to the flow of irridescent beetles.
The dragon fly's mica whirs on his cheeks.
The wood fills with meticulous scintillations—
a dial under the clockmaker's tweezers.

It seemed he slept to the tick of figures;
in the gross amber ether,
they set up nicely tested clocks,
shifted, regulated them to a soprano hair for the heat.

They shifted them here and there, and snipped at the wheels.
Day declined on the blue clock-face;
they scattered shadows, drilled a void—
the darkness was a mast derricked upright.

It seems an antique happiness is flitting beyond them;
it seems sleep smothers the woods;
no elegiacs on the clock's ticking—
sleep, it seems, is all this couple is up to.

(adapted from Boris Pasternak)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sparrow Hills

Like water pouring from a pitcher, my mouth on your nipples.
Not always. The summer well runs dry.
Not for long the dust of our stamping feet, encore on encore
from the saxes in the casino's midnight gazebo.

I've heard of age—its obese warbling!
When no wave will clasp hands to the stars.
If they speak, you doubt it. No face in the meadows,
no heart in the pools, no god among the pines.

Lash your soul to hysterics. Let today froth from your mouth.
It's the world's noontide. Have you no eyes for it?
Look, conception bubbles from the bleached fallows:
fir-cones, woodpeckers, clouds, pine-needles, heat.

Here the city's trolley tracks give out.
Further, you must put up with peeling pine. The trolley poles are detached.
Further, it's Sunday. Boughs screwed loose for the picnic bonfire.
Playing tag in your bra.

"The world is always like this," say the woods,
as they mix the midday glare, Whitsunday and walking.
All's planned with checkerberry couches, inspired with clearings.
The piebald clouds spill down on us like a country woman's housedress.

(adapted from Boris Pasternak)

The Coastguard House

A death-cell? The lodge of the coastguards
is a box over the drop to the breakers;
it waits for you without an owner
ever since the mob of your thoughts
bullied a welcome there,
and unrequited, stayed on.
You didn't take it to heart.

For years the sirocco gunned the gone stucco with sand;
the sound of your laugh is no longer a hand-out;
the compass, a pin-head, spins at random;
the dizzy dice defy calculation.
You haven't taken my possession to heart;
another time has thinned your nostalgia;
a thread is rewound.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I hold an end of the thread,
but the house balks backward;
its sea-green weathercock
creaks and caws without pity.
I hold one end of the thread,
but you house alone
and hold your breath there in the dark.

Oh the derelict horizon,
sunless except for the
orange hull of a single drudging tanker!
Where is the point of crossing?
The spongey dead-drop disembowells the breakers.
You haven't taken my one night's possession to heart;
I have no way of knowing who forces an entrance.

(after Eugenio Montale)

The Magnolia's Shadow

The shadow of the Japanese magnolia
is a scarecrow now that the turkey-wattle
blossoms are blown. Like something wired,
the cicada vibrates at timed intervals.
It is no longer the Easter of voices in unison,
Clizia, the season of the infinite deity,
who devours his faithful, then revives them in blood.
It was more facile to expend one's self,
and die at the first wing-flutter, at the first
hectic rumbling from the adversary—a nursery game.
The hard way begins now; but not for you,
eaten by sunlight, rooted—yet a fragile thrush,
flying high over those frogskin mudbanks,
not for you to whom zenith, nadir, capricorn
and cancer gush together, so that the war may be
inside you, and in your adorer, who sees on you
the stigmata of the Bridegroom—the shiver
of snowfall doesn't jar you. Others
shy backwards and hold off. The artisan's
subtle file shall be silent; the hollow husk
of the singer shall be powdered glass
under your feet; the shadow is neutral.
It's autumn, it's winter, it's the other
side of the sky that leads you—there
I break water, a fish left high and dry
under the new moon.

Goodbye.

(after Eugenio Montale)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Day and Night

A feather floating from a feather-duster
can sketch your figure, or a sunbeam playing
hide and seek on my typescript, or the blinding semaphore
of a child's mirror, or a skylight on a roof.
Along the brick wall, knobby as a crocodile,
scrolls of vapour
prolong the steeple-tops of the poplars;
out on the sidewalk the hurdy-gurdy man's
ruffled parrot takes umbrage.
The night is like the sultry sulphur of Monticatini
on the little squares, on the footsteps; and always
the merciless parole of taking one's measure
in order to rise to the heroism of the quotidian,
the myopia of the incubus or succubus that cannot catch
the light of your eyes in the incandescent cave;
and always the same Saturday night ulcer of the multiplying family,
the cancerous belly-aching on the veranda,
if a shotgun go off and redden your throat
and scatter your feathers,
Oh imperilled bird of the dawn . . .
And the hospitals and cloisters wake
to the reveille of military concerts.

(after Eugenio Montale)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry Fairlie

The B.B.C.

Voice of the Establishment

OF all the voices of the Establishment, the British Broadcasting Corporation is the most powerful. Like other institutions of the Establishment, it has taken a knock or two in recent years. But, inexorably, its spirit will triumph. It has, indeed, already triumphed. When a rival organisation, the Independent Television Authority, was created its members included Sir Kenneth Clark, Lord Layton, Dr. T. J. Honeyman, the Rector of Glasgow University, and Miss M. E. Popham, a former Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College. Not one among them but, in another year or so, might have been appointed a governor of the B.B.C. itself; not one that did not represent the "British mentality at its best", as Reith had insisted that the B.B.C. should do.

Clifford Allen of Hurtwood once wrote to Reith, saying that he was fascinated by the way in which the B.B.C. was creating its own ritual. He was referring to its public ritual, its tireless and solemn celebration of public occasions. A monarch has a birthday, the national anthem is played before the news; one monarch dies, the loudspeakers go silent; another monarch dies, they relay only solemn music. There are even precedents now for handling a monarch's abdication. A state opening of Parliament or a Boy Scouts' Jamboree: a great body of conventions has been built up at Broadcasting House for presenting either. Occasionally the liturgy is altered, something added to, or subtracted from, the established formulary; but, even so, it is still the same, as if the B.B.C. was itself part of the ceremony: that crozier, really a microphone; the censer boys, attendant producers; and, beneath that rich cope, Richard Dimbleby himself. It is a significant comment on the confused state of British opinion that, in recent years, the B.B.C. has had no more enthusiastic defenders than the Labour Party, although it has done more than any other body to buttress the most conservative institutions in the country, to create and perpetuate reverence for the orders, the privileges and the mysteries of a conservative society.

But the B.B.C. has created its own ritual inside its own organisation, which is just as significant. Part of it is no different from the ritual of any overgrown bureaucracy. As Malcolm Muggeridge has written, the B.B.C. "came to pass silently, invisibly; like a coral reef, cells multiplying until it was a vast structure, a conglomeration of studios, offices, cool passages along which many passed to and fro; a society, with its king, lords and commoners, its laws and dossiers and revenue and easily suppressed insurrection." By the time a new idea has received the benediction of each order of the hierarchy, it has usually ceased to be an idea and become a piece of case-law, binding rather than freeing. It is a wonder, indeed, that in such circumstances the producers at the B.B.C. should ever achieve anything of enterprise or moment, and almost anyone who

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has ever had anything to do with the B.B.C. will pay a willing tribute to their devotion to their work; it is only by their persistence that what is heard through the loudspeaker is not always muffled, what is seen on the screen is not always sicklied o'er with the pale cast of second thoughts.

THE ritual is most easily observed at the level of heads of departments and their assistants. Watch one of them greet an eminent person, a bishop or a Cabinet minister or a trade union leader. The eminent person is ushered into what is, perhaps a little ironically, known as the "hospitality" room; the head of department, who has never had his eye off the door, bolts the last corner of his sandwich and advances, hand outstretched, an obsequious smile laid across a face which is sallow from days spent in fruitless committees; he breathes the ritual B.B.C. welcome to eminent persons, "How good of you to come," and, overcome, relapses into a bold offer of a glass of sherry; if this is the kind of programme in which the eminent person is to be questioned by a number of journalists, the next fifteen minutes are spent in introducing him to his inquisitors, with the smiling, ritual reassurance, "I don't think you have anything to fear from Mr. ——", nor does he, for Mr. —— has already had it pointed out to him that the point of the programme is, not to put the eminent person on the spot, but to "reveal his personality"; after a short run through, the producer is desperate and takes the opportunity, while the head of department is reassuring the eminent person, to urge the inquisitors to be tough with their victim; but the resources of the B.B.C. are not yet exhausted; the chairman of the discussion has been chosen for a good reason; when the programme is actually on the air, at the precise moment when one more supplementary question would pin the eminent person to at least one clear statement of his opinion, the chairman intervenes with the languid observation, "I think we have had enough of that question. May I ask, Sir, if it is true that your hobby is fishing?" The full ritual has once more been played through without a hitch; the producer retires, despondent, for a drink round the corner; the head of department assures the eminent person that his personality 'came across well'; and the eminent person withdraws, convinced, as so many before have been, that the B.B.C. is a force for good in the land.

Now, the whole point about this behaviour is that it is born, not just of the timidity of a bureaucracy, but of the natural obsequiousness towards authority of any part of the Establishment. "Broadcasting", wrote Reith in his autobiography, "has for long been recognised as an estate of the realm." It is one of the few unchallengeable statements in the book. The B.B.C. can lay claim to the title of the fourth estate with far more justice than can the Press, which anyhow should never have regarded the title as in any way creditable. What matters is not that the B.B.C. by its constitutional position, is liable to have to submit to pressure from the political authority, although its defenders tend to underestimate the frequency with which such pressure has been exerted. As W. J. M. Mackenzie and J. W. Grove, in their textbook, *Central Administration in Britain*, point out:

> Since the B.B.C. was set up as a public body in 1927, the government has many times intervened in particular matters of day-to-day administration although it has no formal powers to do so. A case in point was the attempt of the B.B.C. to merge its Western and Midland Regions, a proposal which met with such stiff political opposition inside and outside Parliament that the Corporation was forced to abandon it.

Cases of direct intervention such as this are not, however, as important as the assumption that underlies all the B.B.C.'s attitudes to authority: namely, that it *ought* to be on the side of authority.

This assumption was never more clearly stated than by Reith himself, in a letter to Baldwin at the time of the General Strike. "Assuming," he wrote, "the B.B.C. is for the people and that the Government is for the people, it follows that the B.B.C. must be for the Government in this crisis too."

This remarkable assertion, remarkable in its unconscious self-revelation, deserves to

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stand as the classic definition of the Establishment's attitude to those in positions of power. It is precisely this self-deluding assumption that their own views must correspond with the interests of the nation, and the equally strong presumption in favour of the political authority of the day, which are at the root of the Establisment's attitudes. It is not surprising that they should have found their firmest expression in an utterance of the first Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

THE legend of the B.B.C.'s independence and impartiality has been so sedulously spread that it is necessary to expose it at some length. It is possible to do this by taking the evidence almost entirely from the autobiography of Reith himself. This extraordinary book is almost as terrifying as James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* with which it has a more than coincidental resemblance. Here, for all to see, is a detailed self-description of what happens to a man who can totally persuade himself that all that he does is done in the cause of righteousness.

"I was entirely moral," he writes of himself at the age of fifteen. Ten years later, he sees himself as a man "of principle and character and will." "It was indeed royal to do good and be abused," he comments at another point. This was the man, impelled by ambition, protected by his arrogance, sustained by an almost inexhaustible capacity for self-deception, who decided to use the new instrument of broadcasting in order to impose on the people what he thought would be good for them. As will be seen, he developed, as he proceeded on his chosen path, an authoritarian philosophy, compounded of an obsessive contempt for ordinary people and an unassailable belief in his own rectitude, which has left a lasting influence far beyond the corridors of Broadcasting House.

In his autobiography, Reith makes much of the fact that the B.B.C. was not commandeered by the Government during the General Strike of 1926. (The B.B.C. was not then a public corporation, but it was about to become one.) In spite of this, at no time during the General Strike did the B.B.C. behave either independently of the Government's wishes or impartially towards the strikers. Soon after the strike began, for example, the Archbishop of Canterbury telephoned to Reith personally, saying:

> that a manifesto had been drawn up by the leaders of all the Churches; might he broadcast it? He said that he had already communicated with No. 10 and had been told that the Prime Minister would not prevent its being broadcast, though he would prefer not; he had been told to apply to me. A nice position for me to be in between Premier and Primate; bound mightily to vex one or other....

As might be expected, the Archbishop's statement was an innocuous one, proposing terms under which the strike might be called off and negotiations opened, whereas Baldwin had stated that he would not discuss terms until the strike had been called off. Reith talked next to J. C. C. Davidson, who was then acting as Deputy Chief Civil Commissioner, who told him

> categorically that the statement should not be broadcast and that the Prime Minister hoped it would not be.... Rightly or wrongly, therefore, I told the Archbishop on the telephone I was sorry the statement could not be broadcast. He said he supposed the Prime Minister had objected. I replied that the responsibility was mine.

Such was how Reith interpreted the independence of the B.B.C.

But worse was to come. Reith himself suggested to the Prime Minister that he should broadcast to the nation, and Baldwin said that he would like to do so. As if this strange initiative on the part of a supposedly impartial figure were not enough, Reith proceeded to write into Baldwin's manuscript the most famous words which the Prime Minister was to utter during his strike. When Baldwin arrived at Reith's house, he

> handed me his manuscript. "Tell me what you think of this," he said. I suggested one alteration with which he agreed. Then he said he thought of ending with something personal. "Yes," I replied, "something about people trusting you. And what about you saying that you're a man of peace; that you're longing and working and praying for peace; but that you won't compromise the dignity of the constitution?" "Excellent," he said, "write it down if you have a legible hand." I did so....

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reith's hand was legible enough; a moment later the skilful words were uttered.

This, however, was not all.

> Another embarrassment next day. Ramsay MacDonald telephoned to ask if he might broadcast; he knew I was not entirely a free agent, but might he send along a draft? This he did with a friendly note offering to make alterations. I asked Davidson to show it to the Prime Minister and to say I strongly recommended it should go out. Davidson told me it certainly could not go; it would set Churchill off again.

Thus, as the result of Reith's ready deference to the expressed wishes of the Government, both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Leader of the Opposition were banned from the air. It was not until the strike was over that a member of the Labour Party was at last allowed to broadcast.

At the end of the strike came the most remarkable and most ludicrous episode of all. On the evening of the day on which the strike was called off, Reith himself read a message which the Prime Minister had written, again at Reith's request. "It was," he records in his autobiography, "an appeal to forget what had happened, to look forward, to build the country up again." The sentiment—the "appeal to forget what had happened"—was true to the mystique of the Establishment. Clearly, something out of the ordinary was demanded by the occasion. Reith found it. Baldwin's message was followed immediately by a reading of Blake's *Jerusalem*, which was then repeated by orchestra and choir.

> *Bring me my bow of burning gold:*
> *Bring me my Arrows of desire:*
> *Bring me my Spear. O clouds unfold:*
> *Bring me my Chariot of fire.*

But what Reith got was a knighthood in New Year's Honours List.

Two other examples may be given of the deference which the B.B.C. under Reith showed to authority.

In 1931, Churchill asked that he should be allowed to broadcast his views on India. Reith suggested that, if this were permitted, someone representative of the Left-wing should be allowed to broadcast as well, and that these two should be followed by a spokesman of the Round Table point of view. It was a reasonable proposal, but once again the Government intervened, and once again the B.B.C. hastily withdrew:

> We went to see the Secretary of State. He was most apprehensive of the effect of such a series of talks at that time; it would do immense harm in India. The Board (of Governors of the B.B.C.) decided to accede to the request so emphatically made by the Minister responsible for dealing with a particularly delicate and critical situation. One does not need to endorse his attitude and apprehensions to understand the Board's decision.

Of course, the point is that almost any Minister, at any moment, can claim that the situation for which he is responsible is "particularly delicate and critical." As every journalist knows, it is the commonest excuse given by a Minister who is trying to prevent either news or comment being published. The only difference is that journalists tend to be more sceptical of the excuse than the B.B.C. proved to be on this occasion.

As is well known, Churchill was kept off the air during the whole of the period of German rearmament before the 1939-45 war. Reith makes no mention of this in his 500 pages of autobiography, although it was a decision which even his successor as Director-General of the B.B.C., W. J. Haley, concedes to have been "not so admirable". Reith may not have been ultimately responsible for the banning of Churchill—it was due partly to an agreement with the major parties, under which political broadcasters were nominated by the party Whips; and partly to the presumption in favour of established authority which has been shown by every Board of Governors of the B.B.C. —but his silence must be taken to mean that throughout the years from 1933 to 1939 he never demurred.

In June, 1932, Reith played a characteristic role in ensuring the maximum publicity for the plans of the Government:

> On Monday, June 27, I was informed that the Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, had decided to convert the £2,000 million War Loan from five to three and a half per cent. The Cabinet were not to hear about it until 9 p.m. on the following Thursday; he wanted the widest and most intelligent publicity; I was asked to suggest the means.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The Prince of Wales was to broadcast from a Canadian dinner at 9.35 that night; it was arranged that at the end of his speech he should say that the Chancellor was just going to make an important announcement in the House of Commons and warn people to listen to their wireless thereafter. The Chancellor's speech would be given to me on Thursday afternoon and it would be broadcast immediately he had spoken in the House.... It went off all right.

Such was the part played by Reith in establishing the supposed independence and impartiality of the B.B.C. Like many Scotsmen and most sons of the manse, Reith was always "deeply respectful towards those set in authority over him and expected a corresponding respect from those over whom he was set." It was this attitude of mind which he instilled into the B.B.C. from the moment of its birth, and the B.B.C. is not rid of it yet.

It may be objected that Reith left the B.B.C. as long ago as 1938, and that the evidence of more than twenty years ago is no longer necessarily relevant today. There is some slight truth in this. Haley, the only other remarkable Director-General whom the B.B.C. has known, made many changes, and he certainly freed the B.B.C. from many of its formal entanglements with the major parties. The Whips no longer have a stranglehold on political broadcasting, although their influence is still formidable enough. But there is no evidence that Haley in any way changed the B.B.C.'s fundamental attitude to those in authority. No full or relevant memoirs of the period following Reith have yet been published, and this makes it difficult to offer documented examples of the B.B.C.'s behaviour, without falling back on unsupported, or unpublishable, verbal evidence or on the necessarily suspect accounts of those who have quarrelled with the Corporation.

But, in fact, the conduct of the B.B.C. at critical or awkward moments speaks for itself. When, it is pertinent to ask, has a strike leader been offered facilities by the B.B.C. similar to those which were given to Eden during the national railway strike of 1955? Why ban the second of two scheduled interviews merely because in the first Siobhan McKenna made a few spritely observations about the Northern Ireland Government? The examples could be multiplied. The B.B.C. remains today as deferential to those in authority and as predisposed in their favour as ever Reith could have wished that it be. It allows fair play only when the two front benches are agreed about a policy, and then only to the front-bench point of view. This belief in bi-partisanship, as will be shown, has its source in instincts far more complicated than the simple desire to play safe.

Few activities of the B.B.C. encourage this attitude to authority more subtly and more persistently than its news broadcasts. These are, it is claimed, impartial, accurate and trustworthy. They are, in fact, nothing of the sort. A pointed description of a B.B.C. news bulletin may be found in a letter which Jennie Flexner wrote to Tom Jones in 1938. Writing from New York, she said:

> It has been interesting to hear what the B.B.C. sends us: great detail about the English weather; quite full information about the U.S.A. culled from our commentators; and then a little carefully arranged news about Europe in general. So the *New Statesman* is very welcome and we thank you very much.

She was describing an overseas news bulletin in 1938; a home news bulletin twenty years later is little different. A journalist, listening to such a bulletin, is impelled to ask himself whether it bears any relation to the search for news on which he has been engaged during the day, whether for *The Times* or the *Daily Mirror*. The answer can only be that it does not. A B.B.C. news bulletin may sometimes give facts; it only rarely gives news; and it scarcely ever gives the truth of an event or a situation.

This is partly due to its own peculiar conception of what constitutes news. One may take a typical example. A Minister, as is often the case, introduces a Bill which has been forced on him by party or public pressure, but every political correspondent knows, because he has been informed, that the Government's legislative programme is to be so arranged that it will never reach the statute book, and this fact is reported in most newspapers. What does the B.B.C. do?

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It reports the fact that the Bill is to be introduced; it does not, however, report the equally significant fact, which necessarily alters the first, that the Bill will be strangled and that its introduction has merely been a familiar and time-honoured political manœuvre. Examples such as this occur almost every day. By divorcing a happening from its origins and its circumstances, the B.B.C. in its news bulletins is as guilty of a gross distortion of fact and truth as any politically biased newspaper, and almost certainly more consistently so.

But the manner in which the B.B.C. presents the news holds more serious dangers than that. In its selection of news, in its careful phrase and in its unspeakable diction, it fosters the illusion that in every public issue there is a body of ascertainable fact, on which a rational man may found a rational opinion. This is a perilous delusion, especially if people come to believe that the ascertainable fact is unfailingly communicated to them by one body, the B.B.C. It is far preferable that public issues should be presented as they are in the Press, as collisions of great interests, prejudices and appetites; and if these sometimes appear unattractive, it is right that they should do so, for unattractive they frequently are. It is far preferable that the fears and appetites of trade unionists or stockbrokers should be plainly represented and plainly recognisable in the *Daily Herald* or the *Daily Telegraph* than that they should be given respectability and innocence by a B.B.C. news editor and a B.B.C. announcer.

A further danger is that, by its selection of news, the B.B.C. gives the impression that political decisions are taken by a few great and remote men for reasons which are never, can never and should never be explained. Khrushchev makes a speech, Adenauer forces a *démarche*, de Gaulle sends a protest: all of them come as mysteriously from the blue and end as mysteriously in the blue as any titbit of information which filtered out of the chancelleries of Metternich's Europe. Politics, according to the B.B.C. news bulletins, is a matter for those set in authority, and the doings of those set in authority are reported without partiality or favour: without partiality or favour, that is, except to those set in authority. The attitudes of the dissident or the nonconformist, even the common-sense evaluations of ordinary people, find no place in a B.B.C. news broadcast; or, if they do find a place, it is as a peremptory postcript to the elaborate, and even affectionate, accounts of the to-ings and fro-ings of the lords of the universe.

Now, it is not claimed that these dangers are due entirely to any deliberate policy of the B.B.C. In the first place, a B.B.C. news bulletin is limited, at the most, to fifteen minutes, which represents less than two columns of *The Times*. This makes it unavoidable that much will be omitted for which a newspaper can find room, especially since the B.B.C., observing its own order of priorities, considers it necessary to repeat at length almost every official pronouncement or *communiqué* and to record in detail the otiose routine of even semi-attached royalty. But even more important is the fact that the B.B.C., in constructing its news bulletins, is guided by no sense of news values. It is not sufficiently appreciated that one of the casual protections which a free press gives to its public is simply the news sense of its editors, news editors and night news editors. Precisely because they are, first and last, interested in what will interest their readers, they from time to time give prominence to news and views which the B.B.C. would either ignore or bury in the middle of its bulletins. This news sense is not infallible; it is often distorted; the trivial is frequently elevated, the significant sometimes overlooked. But, by and large, the press is far more likely than the B.B.C. to stumble on the significant, especially the significant which is uncomfortable to authority, and present it in such a way that it cannot be ignored: to stumble on it, if one likes, primarily out of an instinct for sensation.

But the criticism of the B.B.C.'s attitude to news which embraces all the others is that it does not attempt to discover the truth. It merely records public events and public

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

statements. Not for it to investigate on its own account the accusations against the Thurso police and decide that they deserve to be ventilated; it must wait until officialdom has admitted that they are a public issue. Not for it to make its own inquiry into the massacre at Hola Camp and present its own findings; it is satisfied with repeating official pronouncements. Not for it to unearth some public scandal, such as the Electrical Trades Union's disposal of its funds; it will ignore the subject until authority has given its official licence to publish. Thus, even in its news bulletins, in that part of its activities which is most commonly and widely praised, the B.B.C. is dependent on authority. It is to authority that it looks for guidance in its selection of news, instead of to a fallible but free news sense; and it is from authority that it takes the tone which informs all its news bulletins. Fed by authority, it is to authority that it gives homage.

But the attitude of the B.B.C. towards those in power is not the most interesting of its characteristics and certainly not the most relevant in a discussion of the Establishment. The Establishment is a difficult and, if misunderstood, dangerous conception. It is a pity, one sometimes feels, that it was ever popularised and there is much to be said for the view that it should have been left to ferment in the more obscure vats of A. J. P. Taylor's writings.

Intended to assist inquiry and thought, this virtuous, almost demure, phrase has been debauched by the whole tribe of professional publicists and vulgarisers who today imagine that a little ill-will entitles them to comment on public affairs. Corrupted by them, the Establishment is now a harlot of a phrase. It is used indiscriminately by dons, novelists, playwrights, poets, composers, artists, actors, dramatic critics, literary critics, script-writers, even band leaders and antique dealers, merely to denote those in positions of power whom they happen to dislike most. If this is all that the Establishment means, the phrase is unnecessary and a fraud. It is necessary and valuable only if it helps to describe something specific about the manner in which power in England is exercised, something that has been previously overlooked or insufficiently examined. In this limited object, the conception of the Establishment can be of some assistance. But although it may be possible to rescue the idea of the Establishment from prostitution, there is no promise that a respectable woman can be made of the Establishment itself. Even General Booth had to admit that there were tasks beyond his powers.

The idea of the Establishment is concerned less with the actual exercise of power than with the established bodies of prevailing opinion which powerfully, and not always openly, influence its exercise. The Establishment is not a power *élite*. If its members have any connexions with power blocs in society, it is not these connexions which give them their particular influence. If in their other activities they represent actual interests, it is not their representation of these interests which makes them members of the Establishment. Indeed, the one significant fact about the Establishment is that it represents nothing in the national life. It has its roots in no class and no interest; it responds to no deep-seated national instinct. It is this rootlessness which is seen by its defenders as its main virtue, and by its opponents as its most depressing fault. Its defenders have, of course, found a euphemism for this rootlessness: they call it disinterestedness. It must be disinterested, they argue, precisely because it represents nothing. What, after all, has the Warden of All Souls to gain? He is retained by no industry. He receives little or no emolument for his untolled services. No higher academic honour can fall to a man who must already be surprised at the full recognition of his talents. Where find a more disinterested or impartial person? Where, indeed, unless in the twilit figure of a still surviving Liberal or a retired Civil servant or a pale headmaster. All of these, it need scarcely be pointed out, are usually to be found in any Board of Governors of the B.B.C., which, however composed, may confidently be

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taken as a microcosm of the Establishment of the day. They move in a world which is utterly separated from reality, governed only by its own mystique. Deprived of real experience, impelled by no real interest, avoiding any real conflict, it is to this, the exalted representation of nothing that they would like to reduce the social and political life of Britain.

Nothing, of course, could be more seductive. The representation of nothing can only be replaced by the representation of something: by the representation of specific interests, which may mean conflicting interests, or of real ideas, which may mean conflicting ideas. How much more simple, how much more civilised, to avoid painful decisions, to represent nothing, to be nothing. The Left-wing critics of the Establishment have altogether missed this vital point. If the Establishment represented established interests, it might, from their point of view, still be deserving of criticism. But why create a new term to describe power blocs which are already familiar? The whole point about the Establishment is that it represents no interests; and its claim to disinterestedness may, in this sense, be readily accepted.

One clear, and relevant, example of this may be given. In the long discussion which preceded the introduction of commercial television, the Establishment came as near as it has ever done to organising a campaign against the Government of the day, a Conservative Government. The earnest periods of Vice-Chancellors writing to *The Times;* the grim tenacity of Lady Violet Bonham Carter; the lengthy judgment of a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, Lord Radcliffe, who actually wrote a letter to *The Times* which occupied one whole column; the soft, enfolding platitudes of the Archbishop of Canterbury; the persistent lobbying of W. J. Haley: not a step was omitted. The debate on commercial television remains one of the clearest examples of the Establishment in action in defence of one of its dearest illusions, namely, that it knows best what is good for other people. But the significant fact to observe is that the Establishment was at this point opposed to a Conservative Government and to the numerous business interests which advocated the introduction of commercial television. Why should the Establishment regard the defence of the B.B.C.'s monopoly as so essential to its own preservation?

WHAT makes the influence of the B.B.C. on the life and mind of the nation so baleful is the wash of "gentle persuasion", as Muggeridge described it twenty years ago, "patiently wearing away angular opinions; like waves on a beach, ebbing and flowing, transforming rocks and stones into smooth round pebbles, all alike. . . ." This is its true mission. It fears, and when it does not fear it despises, non-conformity; and, if non-conformity must be allowed its say, it will gently rob it of all anger and all laughter, of all passion and all heartache, until it lacks both pith and point. Aneurin Bevan, in *In Place of Fear,* describes how a new member of the House of Commons, imagining that he has thrown a brick at the members opposite, finds to his bewilderment that it has turned into a sponge in mid-air. Much the same alchemy is practised by the B.B.C.

It is most evident in discussions. The point of these discussions, as anyone who has listened to them knows but those who have taken part in them know even better, is not to find and explore the point of difference, but to find and scrupulously to map the common area of agreement. In these discussions, the chairmen are all-important, and one sometimes wonders if the B.B.C. does not breed them especially for the purpose in a B.B.C. Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, for it is difficult to believe that they were born of viviparous parents.

"Well, well, well," says one, when two members of his team have for once been aroused, "they did get excited about that, didn't they?" The audience laughs and is soothed.

"I am afraid," says another, "that the team cannot agree about that. Let's hurry on to the next question." His pain and surprise at such a default are barely concealed.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

More commonly, however, even when a discussion has just concluded between three or four people of immovably opposed points of view, the chairman will sum up with bland indifference to what has been said in the preceding half-hour, rescuing from a wide area of conflict some small patch of common agreement which he can offer to the listeners as their reward for hearing him out.

Now, all this is not just an accident, nor does it spring just from a desire to play safe, discreditable enough though this motive would be in itself. It has its origin in the attitude which those in possession and in power try sedulously to foster among those who do not possess and do not have power, the attitude which is common to the B.B.C. and to the Establishment. It is difficult, in these days, to persuade a majority of people to accept ideas merely because they are advanced by authority or prescribed by custom. It is far easier and more effective to persuade them that there really is no difference between apparently opposing points of view, that there really is no conflict either of ideas or interests with which they need bother their heads, that there really is nothing worth getting excited about. Here is the real danger of the B.B.C. It does not preach; it does not even try to persuade; it brainwashes, and it brainwashes with such skill that no one notices. This is its value to the Establishment. It would turn up its nose at subliminal advertising. But it is guilty, day in and day out, of subliminal advocacy, slipping in, through the apparently innocuous words of the chairman, a whole attitude to life and thought.

No attitudes exist in isolation, and it is important to the Establishment that it should encourage acceptance of prevailing opinion in all fields of thought and art. To this task, the B.B.C. brings conviction as well as other qualities. It is in its nature that it should find thinkers or artists acceptable to it only when they have become generally accepted. It hunts names, experts and accepted authorities. Its guide to the world of thought, letters and the arts is *Who's Who;* its list of Reith lecturers might have been culled from *Who Was Who.* Where the boundaries of accepted thought are being crossed, there you will not find the B.B.C.; where there is dissidence or protest, there you will not find the B.B.C.; where there is irreverence or resistance to cant, there you will not find the B.B.C. For a body such as the Royal Academy, there is point in its conservatism; its task is to inform and discipline every new development with tradition. But for the B.B.C.'s attitude there can be no defence. It is not even conservative; it is certainly not the repository of a traditional discipline. It moves sluggishly with all that is worst in British life, all that finds prevailing opinion safe and comforting.

THE relevance of this to the Establishment has already been hinted. Protest never comes from one quarter alone. The effective protest may well lie in some activity which seems far removed from public affairs. It is therefore essential to it that it should ensure, as far as possible, that in every field of ideas only those which are acceptable to it are given prominence.

It does not require a conservative institution, because conservatism is a positive attitude and might at times be indefensible; certainly it might well entangle it in a position from which it would find it hard to extricate itself, and the precondition of the Establishment's survival is that it should be able easily to shift its ground with prevailing opinion and so control it. Nor does it want an institution which is so progressive that it entertains protest; that would be to destroy itself. It wants what the B.B.C. provides: an institution which represents all in the life of the nation to which mediocrity has paid the tribute of success and acceptance. Success and conformity: these are the twins which the Establishment and the B.B.C. labour to uphold.

It may be asked whether a medium of mass communication can be anything but a mirror of prevailing opinion. The answer is that it can, but only on one condition: that one trusts the people to find their way,

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at will and by their own taste, to attitudes which truly reflect their own yearnings and those of society in which they live. This the Establishment, but in particular the B.B.C., will never allow them to do. It has already been observed that one of the most patient illusions of the Establishment is its belief that it knows best what is good for other people, and the B.B.C. holds the same belief as a legacy from Reith.

"In earliest years," he wrote in his autobiography, "accused of setting out to give the public not what it wanted but what the B.B.C. thought it should have, the answer was that few knew what they wanted, fewer what they needed." The result of this attitude was a policy which has been succinctly described by Haley in the Lewis Fry Memorial Lecture which he gave in Bristol University eleven years ago, while he was still Director-General of the B.B.C.:

> The listener was deliberately plunged from one extreme to the other. The devotees of Irving Berlin were suddenly confronted with Bach. Many listeners were won for higher things in this way, but many were irretrievably lost. For the weakness of the process was that so many intolerances were set up.

Haley went on to describe the policy which he substituted for Reith's:

> Since the war we have been feeling our way along a more indirect approach. It rests on the conception of the community as a broadly based cultural pyramid slowly aspiring upwards. This pyramid is served by three main Programmes, differentiated but broadly overlapping in levels and interests, each programme leading on to the other, the listener being induced through the years increasingly to discriminate in favour of the things that are more worthwhile.... As the standards of the education and culture of the community rise so should the programme pyramid also.

The reverse, of course, has happened. The Third Programme has a much smaller audience than it had at its inception; the Home Service has lowered its standards; and the Light Programme has become unvaryingly banal. The B.B.C.'s television service falls somewhere between the Home Service and the Light Programme.

THE element which is common to both Reith's and Haley's attitude is their belief that culture is something which can be transmitted to the mass of a population by a curriculum of humane studies. Their motives were almost certainly different. Reith, a Calvinist to the core, wished to punish people. He wished to give people six of the best every day, and a round dozen on the Sabbath. Haley, a largely self-educated man and in this an almost nineteenth-century figure, believed that people would be enticed, as he was by Benn's Popular Library and Everyman's Library, into voluntarily taking a sort of adult education course through the B.B.C. But, whatever their motives, their fallacy is the same. The mass of a people must find its culture, if it is to be real to them at all, by following their own tastes and their own pleasures.

This is what the B.B.C. have always sought to deny them, and what the Establishment sought to deny them by resisting the introduction of commercial television. One can scarcely blame it. Its one hope of maintaining its position is to devitalise the people, to insinuate its own standards of success and mediocrity, to impose its own culture and with it its own attitudes, until they think and feel with it. The Establishment knows that a population with independent tastes, even if its tastes are only Tommy Steele and Terry Dene, is a population which is capable of feeling, thinking, and therefore perhaps even acting, independently of it. A population which can erect its own idols, even if they are only the idols of Wembley, is a population which will not be pre-disposed to idolise those whom the Establishment would wish it to. It is far safer to brainwash the mass of the population in a middling, middlebrow, middle-class culture; this the Establishment entrusts to the B.B.C. It can entrust it in the full confidence that the B.B.C. will, of its own nature, perform the task to the best of its ability.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alfred Fabre-Luce

Chinese Journey

It was a documentary about the Far East, and the commentary gave the number of "little communists" who would be born while the film was running. Apparently, a Chinese is born every second (every two seconds, an Indian). During the evening we almost felt them making their way, and at the end of the performance they were asking us for our seats. Is Asia equally concerned? No longer threatened by a Western invasion, is it disturbed by its own invasion of itself, by these millions who arrive each year to claim their share and their place? Have births — which were once family events which the State did not even register — become a great collective event, burdening the Eastern spirit? Since 1953 (the year of the first Chinese census) there are 600 million (and more) and for the first time everybody knew it. Has this changed things? I left Paris with such questions in mind.

Westerners once loved Peking not only for its beauty but also for the astonishing advantages they enjoyed there. In one quarter of the city they were rulers, and they used the nearby temples for weekends; at their feet they saw a nation of traders and artisans, and on their whims depended the coolies' hope of life. (If they all took a rickshaw, the runner would die within a year from heart trouble; if they all went on foot he would die within a week of hunger.) I travelled in China thirty years ago, when it was in a state of anarchy, and I had this lordly status. I now told myself: "This time I'll be cut down to my right size." Not at all. The privileges accorded the tourist have, if anything, increased.

At railway stations I automatically began to make my way to the platform by following other travellers. But the interpreter directed me towards a luxuriously furnished waiting-room decorated with flowering plants, and I might have been Edward VII arriving in 1910 at the *Gare du Bois de Boulogne*. If I moved to pick up my suitcase, it was withdrawn from my grasp, indignantly, as though I were about to lose face. In the sleeping-car compartment, designed for four persons, two berths were reserved for me, and in the restaurant car an entire table, from which Chinese were strictly turned away. I would have liked to ask them to sit down, but was not sure whether I had the right to evade these favours. (In addition, I suppose, they were quarantine measures.)

In every city where I stayed I was given a royal suite on the top floor of a skyscraper palace. The entrance to my rooms in Shanghai was a large door lacquered in red and black which opened on to red columns, brightly-coloured chests, mahogany furniture and shelving, porcelain and jade knick-knacks, carved wooden friezes, coloured glass lamps, urns, nests of tables .... I never had time to finish the inventory. (And I have forgotten to add the enormous circular mirrors which gave to this pseudo-palace the final touch of *mauvais lieu*). In the panoramic restaurant I was given a place raised slightly above the tables occupied by crowds of Soviet tourists. The only automobile in the city (or almost the only one) waited for me outside the theatre in which I had been given, free of charge, the best seat.

I was not, as elsewhere in the Far East, a target for touts and beggars; one didn't have to burrow every moment in wallet or pocket, nor keep an anxious eye on luggage. Everything fell into place around me as though by a miracle. I ended up by almost forgetting that I had paid (before leaving Paris) for everything in advance. Only once did I have to change money (and that was to buy a sandalwood fan whose lingering scent was to keep alive for me, in Europe, memories of China). I had been told that I would not need to go to the bank, and it was in fact the bank

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that came to me, in the person of an efficient clerk who knocked at my door at ten in the evening with his little dispatch-case.

In the train I was not given my ticket but entrusted by the interpreter to the guard. I was called at meal-time and conducted back to my compartment, surrounded with attention but deprived of all initiative; a silent traveller, both prince and prisoner. When the train halted at a station I did take a few steps on the platform. For these occasions I even sported the soft hat which (in Communist films) denotes the "Kuomintang oppressor" as surely as (in Chinese opera) a certain kind of white make-up denotes the traitor. It only earned me greater respect. To wear a soft hat in China — and to survive — is to demonstrate considerable power. Under instructions transmitted mysteriously from on high through a number of middle-ranking personages down to floor polishers and kitchen boys, I apparently had the right to absolute priorities. I represented the Party.

How different were these touristic privileges from the humiliating position of the diplomats, herded into ghettoes, politely invited to come and watch workers at work, and, when the international atmosphere was tense, left to the mercy of the mob. One of them told me how he had been pilloried the previous summer after the Anglo-American intervention in the Middle East; and the authorities made it known that they shared the indignation of the demonstrators. Nor did the police make any reply to requests for protection. He had to stand on duty at his door for two days and receive insulting messages from delegations.

For my own part I have no grievances to present. I sometimes questioned the Communists with whom I was talking; but they never directly pressed me; I never found them lacking in courtesy. But why such a display of consideration? Would it really convert a bourgeois? (That would be too naïve.) Was it designed merely to show that the new China knows how to receive guests? Then I am happy to bear witness: the organisation of tourism is perfect. Well, I have kept the rules. Now let us speak seriously.

Two questions, put a hundred times last year after my trip to Moscow, await the traveller returning from a totalitarian country. "Do the people in the streets look happy?" To this I reply with another question: "Tell me first if they look happy in Paris (or London, or New York)...."

"But, of course you weren't able to see anything, were you?" Am I being simple-minded in thinking that one can see a great deal just by walking in the streets, and even from the window of a train? What is immediately apparent is that this country is so "behind," is still so bogged down in ignorance and mud, that there can be no question of its attaining a Western standard of life in the calculable future. But it has made up its mind to help itself. Travelling in India, one sees hundreds of thousands of dreamers who seem to be awaiting improbable assistance. In China, one sees men who have made their "rendezvous with destiny." No stagecraft could arrange the formidable spectacle of earth under plough over thousands and thousands of miles. Thirty years ago, from the same railway line — still single-tracked — I saw peasants strolling among the mirroring ricefields. This time I saw them from early dawn, moving out in columns, and their movements had a kind of frenzy. The effort seemed to imply both governmental fervour and at least a measure of mass consent.

If in this case the evidence of one's eyes confirms official propaganda, at other times it invalidates it. The 8th of March is "Women's Day" in China. An ordinary Chinese Sunday, with no means of transport, and therefore no means of escape; a Sunday with the shops open, the streets crowded with pedestrians. At times a phrase of music broke through the noise (high-pitched cymbal and beat of a drum), and I saw, behind a red streamer, a small procession announcing the celebration. Women, one is firmly told, now do heavy jobs formerly reserved for men. I suppose the young girls in plaits who recently took over the duties of traffic police in Shanghai take a pride in their new posts; but for most others it is all only an additional burden to the exhausting labours of work and home; at the end of the day they have no energy left to go out. In the twelve halls of a great fairground, and even in the workers' clubs, I rarely saw any women. The emancipation of "the second sex?" The Chinese woman trots from her stove to her job, one child in front (within), another in a sling behind her, to the sound of a radio assuring her that she is at long last free.

Popular reactions are sometimes unexpected. I heard schoolchildren burst into laughter when watching, on the screen, Chairman Mao slowly crossing the Yangtse, surrounded by buoys, lifeboats, and a circle of half-submerged courtiers.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the train, where a woman's voice harangued us tirelessly from the radio (speaking with the most meticulous precision as though we were all children), a neighbour who spoke a little English said to me, in a weary voice, "She talks too much!" The older people are beginning to forget the West they once knew. But the young are trying to discover it through jazz, radio broadcasts, and a few foreign films. Marxism, like everything swallowed under compulsion, induces nausea. The Communist universities are turning out liberals as passionate as, in the West, the atheists who have gone through religious schools. The world caught a glimpse of them in 1957, during the brief "Hundred Flowers" period, and there are many indications that they have remained unconverted.*

Another film, depicting episodes in the "War of Liberation" seemed to catch the mood of the militants. At the height of the battle-scenes, part of the audience burst out cheering as if in that hall in Shanghai the past was being relived. But when Soviet or local propaganda films are shown, there is only a meagre audience; acrobats, magicians, and the traditional theatre draw crowds. So Party propaganda tries to make its appeal in the guise of ancient myths. "Production bottlenecks," on posters, take the form of a dragon, a "god of maize" symbolises the record harvest of 1958, and progress in animal husbandry is represented by a small Chinese climbing on to the back of a fabulous pig. All this imagery is addressed to a still unsophisticated people, scarcely emerged from the age of legends.

But enough of this picture book. What about conversations? For the most part, they are monopolised by Intourist. They ask you what you are interested in, whom you would like to meet. But your requests are not always granted. For days on end they repeat, "We are contacting. . . ." To me these mysterious words evoked endless telephoning, busy officials, the search for an ideal interlocutor. Nothing of the kind. The conversation never takes place. "Ask us anything you like! We are at your service!" Like a conjuror able to produce rabbits from a hat, they are prepared to offer you a factory, a circus, a curiosity shop, a doctor, a workers' club, and even "a capitalist." I wanted to visit the rural communes; they agreed willingly. Most of the people I spoke with were young, lively, intelligent, and our conversations were fairly free (more so in the south than in the north, and in the countryside rather than the towns). I congratulated myself on not having revisited the capital; I would have been tied up in propaganda.

My first day in Shanghai I said I would like to visit the museum. "Of course, if we have the time. . . ." I gathered that it was better to begin with the working-class districts. A visit to the house of an unknown worker had, I thought, a certain expiatory character. Each morning I could see from my high window an immense flat city stretching to the horizon: Shanghai, Canton. A city where the dwellings seemed thrown together by chance, where in all the jumble it was impossible to make out the guiding lines of the few main thoroughfares; even the river is concealed by sampans, floating houses. All these people were drawn into the city by the cupidity of Europe at the time of the Opium War. For a hundred years the Westerners made their profits, but that was another epoch. On the old race-track a temple of culture has taken the place of the casino; I had to go and admire it (and beat my colonialist breast).

I also had to walk round a part of the town built about 1925 to see "how the slaves of capitalism used to live." I was received without animosity. "Would you like to visit one of the houses?" my interpreter asked. "You can choose. . . ." But he was already leading me towards one. "We must first of all find out if they want to receive us." But his hand was already on the door, and he opened it without further ceremony. When I prepared to leave, after exchanging a few banal phrases, a little girl broke in: "You were supposed to stay for dinner." That evening, I watched a magician. He boasted of being able to mind-read and record on paper the thoughts of the audience. The messages were translated for my benefit: "China has made a great leap forward!" "Socialism is good!" *etc. etc.*

"You have heard the voice of the people," my interpreter said solemnly.

But enough of this childishness. My overzealous guides never quite managed to keep up this rigidity of demeanour and we soon became friends. One of them, whom I asked to tell me about his childhood, spoke to me at first only of the Inflation and the Terror and the Requisitions of the Kuomintang. But a few days later, when I approached the same subject in a roundabout way, he said: "My grandmother

* "It seems that Marxism, which was all the rage at one time, is no longer the fashion." (Speech by Mao Tse-tung, 27 February 1958.)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

used to throw biscuits into the air to find out if I were going to be intelligent. . . ." Instead of abstractions, I began to find human beings, and they are difficult to dislike.

For thirty-three hours, in the *wagon-lit* from Canton to Hangchow, I had as travelling companion an artist who worked on an illustrated weekly. At sunrise on the second day we had an unusual moment. The train seemed to be making for a lake, and the sun rose behind the water. Clumps of trees and villages with curved roofs began to emerge from the mist. And suddenly we saw, black on white, thousands of Chinese shadows: the peasants, summoned to labour throughout that vast territory by Mao's trumpet. They moved along the narrow paths of earth like acrobats on a tightrope. My companion was visibly moved. A hundred generations of artists who had sought to divine the mysteries of the haze rejoiced in him at the sight of this magnificent black-and-white landscape. I kept on buying copies of his magazine with his work: all with crude anti-American caricatures. I imagine he is ashamed of what he is made to do.

ONE DAY I VISITED a Catholic church at Tsikawe, a suburb of Shanghai, formerly a Jesuit stronghold. I had just watched the few worshippers, men and women separated, finger their beads, bury their noses in their prayer books, cross themselves and return to their places after communion, lingering to touch the Virgin. My chauffeur was already at the door. I waved him away, and turned to a priest who was waiting in a confessional. He replied in excellent French, but it was only a translation of the official propaganda record: "We cannot allow foreign intervention in our affairs," etc. I mentioned imprisoned Christians, but he seemed little inclined to mourn their lot. My chauffeur reappeared. What had I in fact seen in that church? The survival of the Catholic faith, or the beginning of a parody which would one day end up as sacrilege? Hoping that Christ would still be worshipped in that place long after Communist fanaticism had disappeared, I chose the optimistic answer, and asked the priest for his blessing.

THE FOUR NOTE-BOOKS crammed with jottings which I have brought back from my journey overwhelm me. The difficulty lies in interpreting them. Just as in the Far East a house changes its aspect according to the arrangement of the folding screens, so the realities of China can be patterned in different ways by ideology. I sometimes had the impression that I was making the mystery deeper by seeking to dispel it. Was this one of the charms of travel in the Far East? You have to feel your way, by the faint light of intuition, among false statistics in a censored press, set-piece conversations, contradictory information, passionate opinions. *Tant mieux! L'intelligence aime ce qui lui résiste.*

"HOW MANY Chinese are there? Four hundred million? Five hundred million? Give or take a hundred million, I really don't know. . . ."

This is what C. T. Wang, the Kuomintang Foreign Minister, said to me in 1930 as he looked at a map of China in his Nanking office. Twenty years later Mr. Chou En-lai, Prime Minister of the People's Republic, was equally uncertain. In 1950, he adopted as a working hypothesis the higher of Wang's two figures. The census of 30 June 1953 was to show a population of more than 600 million. Was this surprise gratifying? or disturbing? But perhaps this sudden gift of a hundred million Chinese may explain, I think, the birth-control policy inaugurated the following year by the Government (it also explains Mr. Khrushchev's appeal to Russian women to have at least three or four children, in which some have seen an anticipation of the need to "defend Siberia").

One column is given over to centenarians (3,384 of them); there is another in which there is only one entry: a man, aged one hundred and fifty-five. I give this detail not because it is picturesque, but because this "sesquicentenarian" has scarcely inspired confidence among scholars. For the sake of crowning its census with a too beautiful rosette, China has thrown doubt on the whole of it. Those who examine the figures closely will notice that they include eight million Formosans, twelve million overseas Chinese, and eight million inhabitants of the desert regions all lumped together. According to the *People's Daily* itself, a certain number of the inhabitants were recorded twice over; many Chinese have only the haziest idea of their age (a child born on 31 December is said to be two years old on the following day, 1 January); old people count their age not by years but by cycles and dynasties. I have read a scholarly study from which it appears that the published data have no great claims to validity, and that 10 to 20 per cent of this frightening figure may represent only imaginary Chinese.

The calculation of food resources is even more problematical. Last autumn Mao Tse-tung boasted that the grain harvest had been doubled. Claims

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to a more modest increase would have been admitted by everybody — it was impossible for such immense efforts to be without any result. But the claim to a doubled output causes raised eyebrows. What has become of this miraculous harvest? Travelling through China I looked for signs of it but could find none. Bigger rations? On the contrary, supplies to the towns have fallen off; and I was able to ascertain in a rural commune that state deliveries had not been increased. Exports? They scarcely rose at all in 1958, and China's recent failure to fulfil some trade undertakings suggests scarcities rather than plenty. Greater supplies of animal feeding stuffs? Unlikely. Stockpiling? I saw nothing of it. What struck me most of all was the lack of conviction on the part of officials whom I questioned. I still remember the look of anguish on the face of one of them when he asked me: "Are you satisfied with my explanations?" I tend to share the almost unanimous scepticism of foreign experts.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS of making statistics lie. Under the general heading "Grain Harvest", the Chinese include cereals, rice, potatoes, etc. An important deficit can therefore be concealed by an unimportant surplus. Moreover, the figures are given in percentages. If, as has been said (even in the Chinese press), a part of the previous harvest had been hoarded, the figures might indicate an increase in state appropriations rather than an increase in output. Transport deficiencies certainly help to explain the present shortages in the towns; the Government wanted to do too many things at same time. At harvest time part of the population was busy "making steel" in the new furnaces in the countryside, and consequently part of the potato crop was wasted.

I had, of course, no means of making a thorough or scientific investigation. What does stand out, however, is the contrast between the claims made and the results. The day I arrived in China I went to the "Park of Culture" in Canton. Night had just fallen. I lingered to watch the fabulous lanterns surrounded by moving cardboard figures, large transparent fish swimming through the air each with an electric lamp inside — something of the enchantment of other times was preserved there. But my interpreter, thinking my attitude childish, pushed me towards what he considered the real attraction of the place, the Exhibition put on by the Restaurant Hotel Workers. Its theme seemed to be: "Create the maximum of illusion with the minimum of material!" I saw the monument of Peking done in pastry (but it was *ersatz* pastry, made of potato or turnip flour). One showcase contained cutlets in which there was no meat. I know very well that Chinese cooking has always been an art of getting along with practically nothing, nonetheless this glorification of substitutes was staggering. (Imagine, in France, ten years after the liberation, a hymn of praise for the turnip.) This was the first attraction offered the tourist after the "great leap forward" in Chinese agriculture.

The work put in is tremendous and the increase in yield real, but for the time being the consumer does not benefit. In the West production is destined in the end to satisfy the varied tastes of the population; in China the population has to adapt itself to what is there. "Students were once mere consumers. Today they are producers. ... Shanghai, consuming body, has become a producing body." As bees feed their queen, the Chinese people are feeding an invisible goddess of production. She is flourishing (as the figures show), and the Party appears to be satisfied. But what does the ordinary workman think when he reads these Victory Bulletins in his paper, and compares them with his own modest meals?

I asked a workman what he hoped for in the immediate future. I formulated my question rather ambitiously. "Would you like first of all better housing, more leisure. . . .?" He answered, with a timid smile of very simple desire, "We would so much like . . . a little more pork."

"CHINA," say the Communists, "has made dazzling progress." And the anti-Communists, entering into the game, add: "Yes, but only at the cost of putting all the Chinese into barracks." Using figures which cannot be checked, the two schools continue unshaken in their debate. "Soon," say the Communists, "a third of the arable area will be enough to feed the entire population. The rest will be forests, pasture, fallow land. The landscape will be changed by the hand of man to stop the wind and stabilise the rain." And the anti-Communists reply: "The old people are interned, husbands separated from wives, mothers from children. Couples are allowed to meet at rare intervals for a few minutes, while other couples await their turn. . . ."

I saw neither the miracle nor the torture in the two Communes I visited. One was in Kwantung, the other (1500 kilometres to the north) in Chekiang. In theory, the transition

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Cooperative to Communal organisation facilitates a "more rational use of labour" and the establishment in each production unit of "a happy balance between agriculture and industry." In fact, the only change that had taken place in the life of the country people with whom I spoke was the introduction of Communal Kitchens, and even these did not have the all-embracing character attributed to them. The dining-rooms were small and equipped with family tables. There was a choice of two menus and these could be supplemented (on payment) in a canteen, and the people were free to prepare their meals at home on "rest days" or on days when they were receiving their families or their friends. In the crèches I saw fat children wrapped in flannel, smiling happily, and I saw them claimed by their families after five in the evening. And in the "Houses of Happiness" — now called more modestly "Houses of Respect" — only a few old people were without the comfort of their families.

A woman with a job cannot give all her time to her household and her children. On the other hand, she saves time by eating at her place of work. The Chinese are adapting themselves to these conditions, which are becoming a common practice in all countries. If, in France (where in these matters methods of persuasion have not been found very effective) the government were to forbid workers to return home for the midday meal, and to order all evening entertainments to start at 8 o'clock, there would be an outcry against such tyranny, but life in the teeming metropolis would be substantially eased.

THESE ARE SOME of my impressions of the communes I observed; I do not wish to generalise. Elsewhere the change may have been more radical. Remuneration of agricultural workers in China consists of a small wage-payment supplemented by the free allocation of goods — food, clothes, social services, etc. These allowances are called "the ten guarantees," just as, in foreign affairs, they talk of the "five principles." (The Chinese always seem to be counting on their fingers. . . .) In Kwantung I was told that, this year, wages had been increased and guarantees reduced. There are differences. Unevenly put into operation in the countryside, and not yet applied in the towns, "communisation" is at an experimental stage; it is too soon to pass any final judgment on it.

Nevertheless, the system is moving in an unmistakable direction. At Hangchow I examined the plan of the future town. One of the proposed buildings struck me by its size. I asked what it was intended to be. "It's the dormitory." That was the first time I heard the word that was soon to become very familiar. A dormitory is a dwelling place for workers separated from their families. The large amount of construction work in progress in China requires the large-scale transfer of labour. (I even heard — but that was in Hong Kong — of vast "labour distribution centres," not unlike concentration camps.) The work is of a temporary character — dykes, barrages, kilns, storing the harvest. Town-dwellers take part for a few weeks or months. It is (they say) a way of getting "a change of air" in a country where there are no holidays, and of "getting to know" the life of rural workers, thus promoting the "fusion of classes." The system is reminiscent of the Labour Service introduced by the Fascists.

Where exactly is the boundary between "volunteering" and "deportation," between the organisation of labour and the destruction of the family? One would have to know a great deal about life in China to be able to draw it. The "agricutural" contribution made by the few intellectuals I met was, it seemed to me, symbolic rather than real. The requirements of production take precedence. The doctors in a hospital I visited in Shanghai sleep at home (on Saturday) only once a week, ("We have to keep an eye on all the patients") and, in comparison with others, they were privileged. Here is the story of a Peking family: the husband's qualifications made him more useful in Chungking and he was sent there; his wife remained in Peking, but managed after a time to get a transfer to Chungking. All would have been well but for the fact that, just before her arrival, the administrative machine blindly despatched the husband to a third city. The compensations? The dormitory is, as a rule, more comfortable than the individual's home; the man deprived of his wife is consoled by a shower. Bourgeois degradation, socialist progress. No doubt there is an undercurrent of triumph in seeing the roots of reactionary attitudes torn up in this way. That, at least, is the feeling among the activists against whom Mao (the man of the centre) has often had to contend.

IMAGINE yourself dictator in Peking. You are in control of a country that is backward and without large natural resources, but with a vast population. You play this trump card. You raise from the sweat of the people the capital which earlier generations failed to accumulate.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You enhance their capacity to produce by stirring up enthusiasms, by mobilising against two enemies: reaction and personified natural disasters. (That is why the day's work begins with rifle practice — the rifles are of wood — and ends with meetings denouncing the floods.) You try to rescue them from age-old passivity by encouraging sport and teaching them to use their wits. You praise them by saying that they can do everything and that their traditional medicine is better than modern medicine, that with their own hands they will be able to change the climate. You draw them into an exciting production romance, in which public works represent the ups and down of life, statistics the spur, and failures are sabotage. This technique of stimulation is of Soviet invention, but in Mao's China (32 years behind) the drug has to be administered in larger doses. In the USSR it is possible to envisage machines replacing men, but such a policy applied on a large scale in China would only spread unemployment. The accent is therefore placed on the first — and inverse — phase of modernisation: the transformation of men into machines by psychological conditioning.

It may also be that Mao has intended to reach "the stage of communism" more quickly than Khrushchev. The Soviet leader's criticism of the Chinese Communes (in his conversation with Senator Humphrey) appears to corroborate this. But is this a matter of two Marxist and mutually jealous schools — or rather a case of two economies with different needs? Russia is an industrialised country, rich in resources, relatively under-populated, its people well-trained and even (whatever its rulers say) now rather bourgeois in outlook. China, 85 per cent agricultural, has twice as many peasants as the USSR has citizens, and its technical backwardness is great. Its numbers are both its strength and its weakness; it must seek other solutions.

THE Chinese penal code provides for a two-year stay of execution for those condemned to death. Is this clemency, or merely a refinement of cruelty? Not quite either. Two years of production are recovered in this way; that is all. "Well, then, why not extend the period?" No, for in that case the penalty would lose its force, and then production as a whole would be affected.

This is but one example, if a sinister one, of the utilitarian frenzy. I read a letter in the Chinese press criticising a professor for having grown flowers (unuseful activity), and another suggesting that women should sell their hair (a rough calculation gives, for three hundred mil-

Rich and Poor

The Chinese commune has no Russian precedent. . . . Can it really have compromised the Sino-Russian alliance? No objective student of Chinese affairs really thinks so. The alliance is, and will no doubt remain, strong enough to survive more than one cause for mutual tension. Nevertheless, it is hard to dispel an impression that international communism came to an historic turning-point when, in spite of the orthodox revival at Wuhan, the Chinese formulations still look so radically different from the Russian. The differences of "method", and Mr. Khrushchev has recognised them, amount to what appears to be a crossroads on the path to communism: the Chinese way digresses from the Russian way.

Viewed from Asia, the differences are striking, and have never appeared so clearly as they do in the contrast between the Congress at Moscow, and the one held at Wuhan. When Asians turn their eyes towards Moscow they see Mr. Khrushchev proposing something which, to them, looks terribly far-away: a communism which goes with sputniks and atomic power; a communist world of advanced techniques and almost "American" standards of life. But if, on the other hand, they look towards Wuhan or Peking, they see Mao Tse-tung holding up a mirror in which Asia can see herself. To the battalions of workers now changing the face of China, with no tools but their arms and their little baskets slung from yokes of bamboo, communism appears as a solution that is near; and even though the regimentation of life and the ending of the age-old family system frighten the Asians, the free rice in the people's refectories, and the announcements (even if exaggerated) of sensational harvests, are likely to impress them far more than the launching of some new satellites.

Considered from this point of view, Russia seems to be entering upon what looks like a communism of the rich. China's future is more likely to be that of a communism of the poor.

ROBERT GUILLAIN,
Le Monde (Paris), April 13.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lion Chinese women, 200 tons of hair, apparently the proceeds of which would buy a thousand tractors or forty tons of fertiliser). Reading these I could not help recalling the classic stories of misers who re-use envelopes and light two rooms with a single candle. Once the absolute primacy of the useful is granted, our lives appear to be just full of superfluities.

I asked one of my interpreters: "Why do you keep your old people alive? They're no use any more." I awaited his reaction with some curiosity. He might have said: "We have respect for life." Or: "Do you take us for savages?"

What he did say was: "They have produced much and they deserve to be rewarded." The reply evaded my trap without denying the idol.

One evening, in Shanghai, the lamps were giving only a dim light. Current was being diverted to the new industries being built in the suburbs. Since this city no longer trades with the rest of the world, a new means of livelihood had to be found for it. There are no raw materials in the locality, but it is being industrialised none the less. I saw the factories going up, vast buildings surrounded by wretched bamboo huts. First the machines must be set going, then the workmen can be housed. At the food shops in Hangchow, queues started forming at dawn. At Canton, from my room at the top of the "Love of the Masses Hotel," I looked down on the rainswept street. Thousands of carts and "blue ants" with large palm-leaf umbrellas, like walking flowers. Around each cart there was an entire family, some pulling, others pushing; it looked like an enormous beetle with human legs.

In 1956, when an Indian delegation visited the country, they were amazed to see men acting as draught animals. "But for you," they said to the Chinese, "cows are not sacred, why don't you make use of them? . . ."

THIS ANIMALISATION (or mechanisation) of man has nothing sadistic about it. It is an irresistible sequel to the nature of the régime and the size of the population. Nor is it any longer imposed by bloody terror (except, I believe, in the Moslem and Buddhist outlying territories). In the middle of a Commune I visited, I found a photograph of a reactionary being executed; but this kind of thing has, I believe, become exceptional. The picture itself is enough. "Criticism" has taken its place, and it is a powerful instrument in collectivised life. In Mayakovsky's *Bedbug*, one of the characters says of a woman who has just committed suicide: "Oh, they'll criticise her for that in her cell!" They may laugh at this today in Moscow (though I'm not quite sure); in China it would have to be taken terribly seriously.

WHEN THE "HUNDRED FLOWERS" policy came to grief in 1957, Communists presented it as a trap in which right-wing deviationists could be caught in the act. I do not believe this. Mao genuinely wanted relaxation, but he was at once overwhelmed by the magnitude of the Popular anti-Communist reaction. About the same time the free marketing of part of the harvest initiated a dangerous wave of inflation. The isolation of the Communist leaders may be their secret tragedy. They would on occasion like to engage in "free conversation," but when they invite non-Communists to talk with them the reply, only thinly disguised, is "Get away with you. . . ." This is the fate of a régime determined to fight against human nature — every easing of tension endangers it. It can only advance on the same road, towards power (or Utopia). If the scale of the undertaking justifies the maintenance of mass mobilisation, it also has its uses as a diversion. A great many Chinese are kept frantically busy only in order to make them forget that they are superfluous. The newspapers are full of citations — for children who collected large quantities of leaves, for old men who killed large numbers of flies. It is not a question of what all this activity yields; everybody must be kept interested.

"The free man," said Saint-Exupéry, "is he who finds meaning in his work. . . ." Undoubtedly there are a certain number of militants who feel themselves well repaid for their exertions when they read the governmental announcements. Mankind has often worshipped deified animals; why not machines? Or statistics? Why should not indoctrinated Chinese really find the smell of human manure *good*, as some of them claim to do, since it is useful, and therefore sacred? Absolute realism reaches its peak in delirious irrealism. It is no more than a new idolatry, but the convinced Communist derives from it a kind of psychic income. So long as he believes, his exertions will seem justified. For the first time the Chinese, traditionally sceptical, have something like a real religion. Last year the Party mobilised the Catholic and Buddhist priests to help manufacture steel, and they found themselves leading the same life as those other believers. But for them of course — certainly not for the Communists — it was clearly, simply forced labour. The frontiers of slavery are drawn in men's minds.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FORMERLY a visitor to China found a measure of intellectual exchange possible, he used to share a certain common frame of reference with his hosts. But nobody I now met had read a line of Confucius, and they all believed the greatest French writer was a certain Laffitte (of whom I had never heard). That hardly helped.

In Shanghai I visited a Workers' Club. It was an enormous building, and the rooms were full of young men, tinkering with jigsaw puzzles, making music, doing gymnastics. There was even one quiet room, where some men were sitting round a table. "Creative work," I was told respectfully as we passed through. Then I was asked for my impressions. I said: "I have seen nobody who was idle and nobody bored. Everybody seemed to be entirely wrapped up in what he was doing. This large house swarming with youth is impressive. But this I find frightening. Putting forward as *models* men who have studied less, but spent more time 'among the people'; the student who claims to have mastered in 48 hours of 'intensive work' *all* the knowledge of his absent teacher; the peasant woman who plumes herself on having written ten thousand lines without a break; the worker who wrote in one year six stories and four-hundred-and-twenty-three poems and now announces his intention of stepping up his output. In one of your exhibitions I saw (and in the places of honour!) inventions which were no more than childish tinkerings. What a glorification of amateurism! Doesn't all this arouse resentment among your professionals? . . ."

The reply to this was the argument that the Chinese Revolution was still in its early stages, and that what was important now was to encourage people to take up creative work; later they could choose among the things created. Similarly in the Communes I heard people say: "The time will come when we shall work for only half the day; the rest of the time we shall reserve for culture. . . ." I did hear this kind of talk, although it receives little encouragement in the press (where you read little except the need for additional exertions). I find the argument difficult to take. Some time ago I met a young Western student who had quit his university, and he told me that he first wanted to "make a lot of money" and then he would resume his studies. But must not a man or a régime begin with essential values? To project them into the future and deny them in the present is only the familiar pattern of all alibis.

This is a Communist Sparta, and it is capable of still greater privations. It can plan and achieve and develop. But any flowering of personality would burst it asunder. It can reckon with war — but not with happiness. The immense labours should, logically, bring an improvement in the people's standard of living; it will be granted only with reluctance. In any event the bourgeois pleasures of disinterested culture will be denied.

CHINA had adopted, in 1954, a Malthusian policy (naturally, not called by that name) but did not maintain it. Propaganda in favour of birth-control has disappeared today. I had heard that members of the Shanghai Council for Hygiene had met to formulate a birth-plan: ten years, ten children. I asked to meet one of these pioneers, but I was told it was impossible. Had they been invited as "volunteers" to raise their usual norm? Would they be punished as strikers or saboteurs if they failed? Who will ever know? . . . But I must not simplify too much. The clinics which had been established are still open. What has been rejected by the economists is still recommended by the hygienists: a mere change of label. Some people even see in the separation of the sexes a new form of birth-control. The officials proudly declare: "We are *short* of workers!" (In discussion, however, they admit that it is not a very serious argument.) The first result of increased fertility is to disturb production. (Instruction in contraception was given, first of all for purely practical reasons, in the factories which, since 80 per cent of their labour consisted of women under 25, failed to reach their targets owing to the large number of pregnancies.) Nevertheless, it is not admitted publicly that excessive births aggravate the difficulties of food supply, although this is conceded privately.

All the same, there has been a change of policy, and I was curious to find the reason. Why not the most simple one? — the policy had failed. Birth control had spread in certain urban centres around nuclei of medical instruction, but not among the masses. When I asked a leading Shanghai surgeon if, during the past few years, births had decreased in his city, he replied, "I think so. I get the impression that there are fewer. But I'll get the exact statistics for you." The figures which I subsequently received totally belied his assertion. For 1,000 inhabitants, 24 births in 1950, 36 in 1958. The trend shown in the clinics is not necessarily the general tendency. Had it persisted, the Chinese government would have established its powerlessness. Without at least the skeleton of a real

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

medical service, without general instruction, no substantial progress could be expected.

There is another factor. In Japan the fall in the birth-rate was precipitated by two words in the eugenics law of 1948: "The interruption of pregnancy is legal when its continuation would be harmful to the health of the mother for physiological or *financial* reasons ..." Among the poorer classes, all women may thus claim the right to abortion, and doctors have, in fact, interpreted the provision in this way. In China (or so at least it was explained to me) abortion is not granted to "egoists."

It would be absurd to over-emphasise the contrast. Abortion exists in China too, and the Chinese doctors with whom I talked declared themselves convinced that the cause of eugenics would triumph in the end. "No woman", one of them said to me, "wants to have a child every year." I asked him, "If a sterilising pill is discovered will you use it?" He replied, "Certainly." But he hoped that this pill "would be discovered by a Chinese" (typical of the prevalent nationalism). Some time ago, a notable figure in the régime made half the world laugh by assuring Chinese women that they could avoid having children by eating tadpoles. The method did not prove successful. (Never mind, better luck next time!) After having been the country producing the most children, China will be the one where the infallible means of non-production was invented.

BUT WE ARE NOT there yet and, for the moment, the demographic situation gets steadily worse. This pejorative phrase would not be accepted by the Chinese government; after all, the increase of births gives it certain advantages. One million more children is a further reason for raising norms, accelerating collectivisation, preventing the growth of "bourgeois" tendencies. (The communal kitchen, by economising in food, allows more persons to live on the same harvest.) One can even say, paradoxically, that every child which is now born contributes to the destruction of the family. Organised over-population is also the traditional legitimation of the claims for "living space." In the age of the U.N., democracy, and human dignity, it automically creates rights and prepares future international majorities. This apparent manifestation of confidence in life is only a calculated re-affirmation of the narrow natalism of the old traditionalists.

ON leaving China I was escorted across no man's land by a representative of the China Travel Service. In Hong Kong, there was suddenly the familiar atmosphere, big London omnibuses, beggars, prostitutes, and I thought I could risk a tip. The man refused coldly, turned his back on me, and left. His last glance seemed to say: "There you are! Back in your muck again. ..." I related this episode the next day to a priest. "The Chinese," I said, "have become virtuous. ..." He said nothing. I added, "If they have become virtuous and are, besides, making great material progress, what remains for us?" "A prisoner necessarily ceases to commit public offences," he replied. "You do not conclude from that that he has become honest. There is no honesty without freedom."

I suppose he was right. I should have said: "The Chinese have become puritanical." Excessive puritanism is nearly always a cloak for hidden vices. Chastity is no excuse for lying, denunciation is no more praiseworthy than corruption.

China today (like India yesterday, but in another way) is hypnotised by a concern for purity. The slightest doubt, the least sensuality are — like the smallest fly — regarded with aversion. Such rigour suggests a secret frailty. Can these people be kept indefinitely in their present state of hyper-tension? Think of a feverish adolescent, driving himself too hard, every gesture proclaiming his exaltation. Is he in good health? Wouldn't you expect a breakdown? China is that adolescent.

I TRAVELLED FROM Canton to Hong Kong with a girl who, having a parent in each town, lived first in one and then the other. I asked her what kind of a comparison she made. She replied: "In Hong Kong you can find everything, but you have nothing to buy it with. In Canton everybody has money, but there is nothing to be bought." An over-simplified answer? In Canton a worker earned a wage but it did not allow him to provide decently for himself. In Hongkong, there were unemployed, and one could see tramps near unoccupied semi-luxury flats. How then explain the attraction exercised by Hong Kong on the Chinese? Is the repulsion of Red China a sufficient explanation? Perhaps the key to the enigma — at least so it seemed to a Frenchman — could be found in the Pidgin-English vocabulary. It is the word "*maybbee*". A worker arriving safely in Hong Kong (maybe) has plenty of reasons to suspect that he will live poorly there. However, with luck, he may find work, send his children to city schools, better himself slowly, and even, who knows, become a millionaire. Maybe. ...

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colin MacInnes

In September

I WAS up very early on that morning, as if with a private alarm clock in my brain, and it was one of the most beautiful young days I've ever seen. The dome of the heavens, when I looked out up at it over my geraniums, was pale pink glowing blue, with nothing in it but a few stray leafs of cloud, lit up gold and green by sun you couldn't see behind the houses. The air was fresh, blown right in from the sea, and there wasn't a sound except from hundreds of thousands of pairs of lungs, still slumbering there in Napoli. Peace, perfect peace, I thought, as I sucked in the warm air of my native city. And it was also, as it happened, my nineteenth birthday.

I put on some music and abluted, then made two Nescafés and carried one down for Hoplite. The cat was absent. Waste not want not, I decided, so carried them further down to Cool. Another cat out on the tiles last night. No use disturbing Big Jill that early, so I drank both cups on the front doorstep, and stood there taking in the scene.

And I saw this. Coming down the street, from the N. Hill Gate direction, were a group of yobbos, who most probably had been out at some all-night jungle-juice performance too, and who straggled across the street and pavement in that *messy* way they have, and whose bodies were all *wrong* somehow — I mean with lumps and bumps in the wrong places — and whose summer drag looked hastily pulled on. And coming up the street, from the Metropolitan Railway direction, were two coloured characters — not Spades, as it happened, but two Sikh warrior products, with a mauve and a lemon turban, and with stacks of hair. Well, when the two groups met, the Sikh characters stepped to one side, as you or I would do, but the yob lot halted, so as it was difficult to pass by, and there was a short pause: all this just outside my door.

Then one of the scruffos turned and looked at his choice companions, and grinned a sloppy grin, and suddenly approached the two Sikh characters and hit one of them right in the face: with his fist pointed so that the top knuckles got inside the skull. So long as I live, I swear, I shall never forget the look on that Asian number's face: it wasn't at all fear, it wasn't at all rage, it was just complete and utter unbelief and surprise.

Then the other Sikh one shouldered up beside his buddy, and the yobbos drew away a bit, then both the two groups separated, and the oafo lot went off laughing down the hill again, and the Sikhs started chattering and waving their arms about. They walked on a little bit, then turned and looked back, then went off chattering and waving again up hill out of sight and sound.

Now, you will be asking, what about me? Did I run out and take a poke at the chief yobbo, and bawl the bunch of little monsters out? The answer is — I did not. First of all, because I simply couldn't believe my eyes. And next, because the whole thing was just so *meaningless*, I suddenly felt weak and sick: I mean I've no objection, really, to men fighting if they want to, if they've got a *reason*. But this thing! Also — I don't like to say this much, but here it is —

A year has gone by since the race rioting of Notting Hill Gate, and Colin MacInnes, a "resident novelist," must be the first writer to attempt to use this material in fiction. Dan Jacobson's study, "After Notting Hill," which we published in December 1958, was analysis and documentary. The pages from Mr. MacInnes' new book, ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, *are no less "documented" for being part of a fictional story; they are excerpted from the final scenes of the novel he has just completed.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I myself was scared. It doesn't seem possible such sordids as this lot could frighten you, and certainly one wouldn't, or even two or three of them.... But this little group: it seemed to have a horrid little mind, if you can call it that, all of its own, and a whole lot of unexpected force behind it.

As soon as you passed into the area, you could sense that there was something on. The sun was well up now, and the streets were normal, with the cats and traffic — until suddenly you realised that they *weren't*. Because there in Napoli, you could feel a *hole:* as if some kind of life was draining out of it, leaving a sort of vacuum in the streets and terraces. And what made it somehow worse was that, as you looked around, you could see the people hadn't yet noticed the alteration, even though it was so startling to you.

Standing about on corners, and outside their houses, there were Teds: groups of them, not *doing* anything, but standing in circles, with their heads just a bit bent down. There were motor-bikes about, as well, and the kids had often got them out there at angles on the roadway, instead of parked against the kerb as usual, for a natter. Also, I noticed, as I cruised the streets, that quite a few of those battered little delivery vans — usually dark blue, and with the back doors tied on with wire, or one door off — had groups around them, also, who didn't seem to be mending them, or anything. There were occasional lots of chicks, giggling and letting out little yells, a bit too loud for that time of the morning. There were also more than the usual number of small kids about. As for the Spades, they seemed to creep a bit, and keep in bunches. And although they often did this anyway, a great number of them were hanging out of windows and speaking to each other loud across the streets. As I continued on, I came to patches once again where all was absolutely as before: quiet and ordinary. Then — turn a corner, and you were back once more in a part where the whole of Napoli seemed like it was *muttering*.

Then I saw my first "incident". Here it was. Coming along, pushing a pram and wearing those really horrible clothes that Spade women do (not men) — I mean all colours of the spectrum and the wrong ones put together, and with shoes like Minnie Mouse — was a coloured mum with that self-satisfied expression that all mums have. Beside her was her husband, I imagine it was — anyway, he was talking at her all the time, and she wasn't listening. Then, coming from the opposite direction (and there always seems to *be* an opposite direction), was a white mum, also with kiddie-car and hubby, and whose clothes were just as dreadful as the Spade mum's were — except that the Spade girl's looked worse, somehow, because you could see, at any rate, that she was *trying*, and hadn't given up all hope of glamour.

Well, these two met and, as there's no law of the road on pavements, both angled their prams in the same direction, and collided. And that started it. Because neither would give way, and the two men both joined in, and before you knew where you were, about a hundred people, white and coloured, had appeared from absolutely nowhere. Quite honestly! I was watching the thing quite closely from near to, straddling my Vespa on the roadway, and one minute there were two (or three) people on each side, and next minute there were fifty.

Now, even then, if in normal times, the thing would have passed off, with the usual argument, and even then, if someone had stepped in and said, "break it up," or "don't be so f---g idiotic," all would have gone well — but no one said this, and as for coppers, well, of course there wasn't one. Then somebody threw a bottle, and that was it.

That milk that arrives mysteriously every morning, I suppose it brings us life, but if trouble comes, it's been put there — or the bottles it comes in have done — by the devil. And dustbins, that get emptied just as regularly, and take everything away — they and their lids, especially, have become much the same thing: I mean, the other natural city weapon of war. They were soon both flying, and I had to crouch behind my Vespa, then pull it over, when I got a chance, behind a vehicle.

Even then, it was still, in a way, if you'll believe me, rather *fun:* I mean, the bottles flying, and the odd window smashing, little boys and girls running round in circles shouting, and people weaving and dodging, like they were playing a sort of enjoyable, dirty game. Then there was a scream, and a white kid collapsed, and somebody shouted a Spade had pulled a knife. It's always those attacked who give the pretext — don't we know! Anyway, there was some blood for all to see.

Then, just as suddenly, the Spades all ran, as if someone had told them to on a walkie-talkie from headquarters somewhere — and they dived round corners and inside their houses, slamming

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doors. Honest! One minute there were white and coloured faces battling, and the next there were only white. There was a lot of shouting and discussion after that, and a few more bottles through the windows where a Spade or two was peeping out, and the white kid was carried on the pavement where I couldn't see him, and the law arrived in a radio-car and told everybody to disperse. And that was that. All over.

THEN, a bit later, came incident number two — or three. Along another road I was prospecting, I saw driving along quite slow, because anyway it was pulling up, one of those "flashy cars" and four Spades in it — and the driver handling the thing in that way Spades often do, i.e., very expertly, but as if he didn't realise it was a *machine*, not a wonderful animal of some kind. Well, two of those delivery vans I spoke of sandwiched it like the law cars do in U.S. crime films, and out from the back and front of it came about sixteen fellers — those from the back spilling out as if they were some peculiar kind of cargo the van had on board that day. And these were not Teds, but *men* — anyway, up in the twenties, somewhere, I should judge — and this time there was no previous argument whatever, they just rushed at that vehicle, and wrenched the doors open, and dragged out the Spades, and crunched them. Of course, they fought back — though once again, there was that same brief hesitation as I'd noticed with the Sikhs, that same moment of complete *surprise*. Two were left lying, and got kicked (those boys certainly knew all about vulnerable parts), and two made away, one weeping; and about a hundred of my own people gathered round about to watch.

And about those who watched, I saw something new to me, and which you may find quite incredible — but I swear it's the truth I'm telling you — they didn't even seem to *enjoy* themselves particularly — I mean, seeing all this — they didn't shout, or bawl, or cheer, they just stood by, out of harm's way, these English people did, and *watched*. Just like at home at evening, with their Ovaltine and slippers, at the telly. Quite decent, respectable people they seemed, too: white-collar workers and their wives, I expect, who'd probably been out to do their shopping. Well, they saw the lads get in the Spade's car, and drive it against a concrete lamp-standard, and climb back in their handy little delivery vans, and drive away. And once again, that was that. Except that a few coloured women came out and tended the men lying there, who the bystanders I spoke of had come up a bit nearer to, to examine.

THEN came another incident — and soon, as you'll understand, I began to lose count a little, and, as time went on, lose count a bit of what time was, as well. This one was down by the Latimer road railway station, among those criss-cross of streets I mentioned earlier, like Lancaster, and Silchester, and Walmer, and Blechynden. In this part, by now, there was quite a muster: I mean, by now people realised what was happening — that there were kicks to be had if you came out in the thoroughfare, and besides, the pubs were emptying for the afternoon. And they all moved about like up in Middlesex street at the market there on Sunday, groups shifting and re-forming, searching. People were telling about what had happened here, or there, or in some other place, and they all seemed disappointed nothing was happening for them then and there.

Well, they weren't disappointed long. Because out of the Metropolitan Railway station — the dear old London Transport, we all think so safe and so reliable — came a bunch of passengers, and among them was a Spade. Just one. A boy of my own age, I'd say, carrying a hold-all and a brown paper parcel — a serious-looking kiddy with a pair of glasses, and one of those rather sad, drab suits that some Spades wear, particularly students, in order to show the English people that we mustn't think they're savages in grass skirts and bones stuck in their hair, but twentieth-century numbers just like we are. I think he was an African: anyway, there's no doubt that's where his ancestors all came from — millions of them, for centuries way back in time.

Now, this kiddy must have been rather dumb. Because he evidently didn't rumble anything was at all unusual — perhaps he'd come down from Manchester or somewhere, to visit pals. Anyway, down the road he walked, stepping aside politely if people were in his way, and they all watching. All those eyes watching him, and the noise dropping. Then someone cried out, "Get him!" and the Spade dug it quick enough then — and he started running down the Bramley road like lightning, though still clutching his hold-all and his parcel, and at least a hundred young men chasing after him, and hundreds of girls and kids and adults running after *them*, and even motor-bikes and cars. Some heathen god from home must have shouted sense into his ear just then,

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because he dived into a greengrocer's and slammed the door. And the old girl inside locked it from within, and she glared out at the crowd, and the crowd gathered round there, and they shouted — and I'm quoting their words exactly — "Let's get him!" and "Bring him out!" and "Lynch him!"

They cried that.

But they didn't get him. What they got, was the old greengrocer woman instead, who came out of another door, and went for them. Picture this! This one old girl, with her grey hair all in a mess, and her old face flushed with fury, she stood there surrounded by this crowd of hundreds, and she bawled them out. She said they were a stack of cowards and gutter bastards, the whole lot of them, but they started shouting back at her, and I couldn't hear. But she didn't budge, the old girl, and her husband had got the shutters up inside, and by and by the law made its appearance with some vans as well this time, and they got through the crowd, and started milling round, and collected the young African, and moved among the mob in groups of six and told it to disperse — with truncheons out this time, just for a change.

I WENT off after this to be a bit alone. I rode out of the area to the big open space on Wormwood Scrubs, and I sat down on the grass to have a think. Because what I'd just seen in there made me feel weak and hopeless: most of all because, except for that old vegetable woman (who I bet will go straight up to heaven like a supersonic rocket when she dies — nothing can stop that one), no one, absolutely no one, had reacted against this thing. You looked round to find the members of the other team — even just a few of them — and there weren't any. I mean, any of us. The Spades were fighting back all right, of course, because they had to. But there were none of us.

When this thing happens to you, please believe me, it's just like as if the stones rise up from the pavement there and hit you, and the houses tumble, and the sky falls in. I mean, everything that you relied on, and all the natural things, do what you don't expect them to. Your sense of security, and of there being some plan, some idea behind it all somewhere, just disappears.

I dusted my arse, and rode down Wood Lane to the White City, where the old B.B.C.'s building that splendid modernistic palace, so as to send their telly messages to the nation. And I looked at it and thought, "My God, if I could get in there and tell them — all the millions! Just take them across the railway tracks, not a quarter of a mile away, and show them what's happening in the capital city of our country!" And I'd say to them, "If you don't want that, for Christ's sake come down and stop it — every one of you! But if that's what you do want, then I don't want you, and for me, it's good-bye England!" Then I turned back again inside the area, inside those railway tracks that hem it in — out of White City into Brown Town — and as I was travelling past the station there, I saw another small encouraging sight, and stopped and looked.

This was a small old geezer, with a cloth cap and a choker, who'd got hold of a young Spade so tight I thought at first he was arresting him, or going to damage him in some way. But no! Apparently this boy must have told the geezer he lived up in Napoli, and was a bit dubious about going home, and this old codger, feeling his youth again, must have grabbed him by the arm, and said, "You're okay, son, come with me," and set off holding the coloured boy with a look on his face as if to say, "If you touch him, then you touch *me*, too!" And I wondered why it was the only two I'd seen who'd fought back had been old-timers?

But that gave me an idea. I rode back to the White City station, parked my Vespa, and went inside to have a look around. And sure enough, there was a young Spade standing there, and I went up to him, and gave a great big smile I didn't feel, and said, how's tricks? and would he care for a lift home on my Vespa? He seemed a bit doubtful, but I asked him where he lived and went on chatting to him, because I've found if you keep on *talking* at anyone who suspects you, the mere sound of your voice usually wins them over, and he said Blenheim crescent, and I said hop on then, and I'll see you there. As we went out, a ticket number said, was I carrying my iron bar, just in case? Real witty.

So I batted along, and I tried to make conversation with the kiddo, but he just clung on and said, "Yeh, man!" to everything I said, and as we reached the groups of bystanders we got one or two yells and whistles, and the odd brick, and a few kids ran out on the road in front of us, but I weaved or accelerated, and we got through to Blenheim crescent without trouble. I was keyed up, expecting motor-bike chases, and big mobs, but nothing happened. And that was the extraordinary thing that day in Napoli! It all popped up here, and subsided, then popped up there, then somewhere else, so that you never

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knew what streets were frantic, and what streets peaceful.

Well, I saw the kid to his door, where lots of dark faces were peering through the curtains, and he asked me in a moment. Well, frankly, *I* was a bit dubious now. It wasn't that I was afraid of my own people seeing, so very much, but I was a bit scared of the Spades themselves! After all, one white face is so much like another — especially on a day like this. However, I thought I really *must* stop being scared, or I just wouldn't get anywhere, and so I said sure, why not, I'd be glad to, but could I bring my Vespa in there and park it in the hall.

WELL, he took me down to the basement, and there I found a sort of war cabinet of West Indians in progress. The boy made it clear, right away, that I wasn't a P.o.W. or something, and they patted me on the back, though several still looked dam suspicious, and wouldn't talk to me. They gave me a glass of rum, and one said to me, what did I think about all this? And I said I was disgusted and ashamed. Well, one of them said, at any rate, I was the first white man they'd seen that day who looked them in the eye when he spoke to them.

And then the phone rang, and a tall Spade with a bald head picked it up — and would you believe it, he was through on the blower to Kingston, Jamaica! And he had quite a natter with the folks back home, and I didn't much like a lot of what he said, and I wondered how my own people, out there in Kingston, surrounded by thousands of black faces, would be feeling when the news of it got around? And I also wondered whether, all over Napoli, there weren't other Spades calling Trinidad, and Ghana, and Nigeria, and Christ knows where, and telling *them* the story? And how all the whites in all *those* places would be treated, too? Because one big mistake a lot of locals make is to think that all Spades work on the London Transport or on building sites — whereas stacks of them are business and professional men, who know all the answers: for example, this bald-headed character turned out to run a chain of hairdressing establishments.

Then one of the Spades who was still suspicious of me said, did I think it was the English way of life to attack 6,000-odd in an area where there were 60,000 whites or more, and if us white boys wanted to show how brave we were, why didn't we choose an area like Harlem, where the whites were a minority? I could think of a lot of answers to that, but the others shut him up immediately — in fact, what amazed me the most, in the middle of all this, was how dam polite they all were to me. And then they started chatting about plans, and one said the law was no use whatever, they must set up vigilantes; and another said anyway, they'd got to organise as a community, and keep it that way in future; and another said up in Nottingham, they'd moved Spades out of certain areas "for their own safety," but if anyone tried to move *him*, he was dam well staying where he was, because this was his house, and his wife and kids were born here, and he'd had a bash in the R.A.F., and he was one of the Queen's objects the same as any other. And I began to get embarrassed, as you can imagine, because of course I partly agreed with them, but also I wanted to stick up a bit for my own people somehow, if I could. And the hairdresser cat realised this, and he and the kid I'd brought there saw me to the door, and opened it cautiously, and said all was clear, and I trundled my Vespa down into the road. And the kid came out to the pavement, and said thanks for everything, and shook my hand and gave me one of those smiles that Spades can turn on when they feel like it.

WELL now, I thought, I'd better look in back home, to see if anything was happening *there*, and also to find out if Cool was quite okay. So I started off, and made the corner, where eight or so crashed the bike, and slung me off, and next thing I was standing against a wall with faces six inches from me. And what I liked least of all was that the oafo nearest me was carrying something wrapped in a science-fiction magazine.

Now luckily, the happenings of the day had made me so indignant, I wasn't frightened any longer. And also, although I'm a nervy sort of number, when a crisis comes, I usually surprise myself by keeping calm — however much my ticker's pounding there inside. So I stayed still as a rock, and eyed the yobbos, waiting, with one hand in one pocket round my bunch of keys, and the third finger through the ring of it.

"We sore yer," said an oafo.

"Darkie-luvver," said another.

When I glimpsed the S.F. number un-wrapping his chopper, I whipped my keys across his face, and kicked another you-know-where. Then it was on! I was tensing for the death-blow as I thrashed about, when suddenly I realised I was not alone in this — in fact, for just a moment,

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had nobody to fight with, because two other kids were fighting them, so without waiting to raise my hat and ask who the hell they were, I ran over to my fallen Vespa, grabbed the metal pump, and cracked it on some skulls, and see! the Teds were in flight, except for one lying whimpering on the pavement, and I was shaking hands with Dean Swift and the Misery Kid.

"Dr Livingstone, I presume," said Swift.

"You bet your bloody life it is!" I cried.

"That feller *hurt* me," said Misery, rubbing his hands and looking very pale and angry.

"My Gawd!" I cried, messing their hair-dos for them and almost kissing them. "It had to take *this* to bring you two together!"

The Ted on the deck was trying to get up, and the Dean pushed him down and held his neck with his Italian shoe. "We heard there'd been happenings," he said, "and thought we'd come up and take a dekko."

"It's all in the evening papers," said the Kid.

Well, was I un-displeased! And was I glad it was two kids of my own age, and two jazz addicts, even if of different tendencies, and even if one was a layabout and the other a junkie, because this seemed to me to show their admiration for coloured greats like Tusdie and Maria really *meant* something to them.

The Dean had picked up my Vespa, and he checked the motor, and then said, "Well, how we to now? What we go where we do?"

"What about this one?" I said pointing to the Ted, who the Misery Kid was holding by his hair.

The Dean approached him. "You're full of s--t, aren't you," he said, whizzing his fist round within a half-inch of the zombie's face.

"Wot I dun?" asked the yobbo.

And that's it! He'd scare you stiff inside his little group, but now he looked such a drip you couldn't even get vexed enough to crunch him.

"Wot you dun?" said Dean Swift. "What you've done's get born — that was your big mistake."

The yoblet, seeing he wasn't going to get fixed, had plucked up courage from somewhere. "Ar," he said, "so a few of ver blacks git chived. Why oll ver fuss?"

The Dean swung him round, gave him a Stanley Matthews kick on his striped pink jeans, and told him to beat it fast. At the corner, the thing cried out, "Cum back termorrer fer ver nest lot!" and cut out.

Well then, as we were discussing this, and examining the yobbos' chopper, who should come round the corner but a cowboy: one of that youthful, pastey sort, with shoulder-blades, and a helmet not too secure, and boots too big for his athletic feet — usually the least pleasant, those young ones, that is, if any are. And he looked at the Vespa, and we three, and the metal pump, and the chopper, and he said, "What's this?"

"You're prompt on the scene, son," said the Dean.

"I said, 'What's this?'" the law repeated, pointing at the chopper.

"This," said the Dean, "is what the local lads you can't control tried to do my pal with."

"What pal?"

"Me," I said.

"And why you holding that pump?"

"Because I used it to defend myself," I told him.

"So you were in it too," the cowboy said.

"That's right."

"But you say you got attacked."

"You're beginning to dig, mate," said Dean Swift. "You're speedy."

The copper stared at the Dean. But the Dean had carried that look often enough before, and stared right back. "You call me 'officer'," the cowboy said.

"I didn't know you were one, captain. I thought you were a junior constable."

The cowboy looked round, as if wishing for reinforcements, and said. "You're all coming to the station."

"Why?" asked Dean Swift.

"Because I say so. That's why."

The Dean gave a crazy yell of laughter. And though I sympathised with his attitude, I wasn't pleased, because all I wanted was to get to hell out of here immediately.

"Look, captain," said Dean Swift. "Aren't you supposed to arrest the law-breakers? Well, that's the way they went — all the whole click of them."

"If you don't shut your trap," said the cowboy, "I'll knock you off as well."

"Why?" said the Dean. "You afraid of Teds, then?"

"Take it easy, Dean," I said.

"Boy, of course he is!" cried Swift, turning to Misery and me, as if he was explaining something perfectly well known to all. "He's young, he's alone, he's not used to trouble of this kind — he's used to pinching parkers on the broad highway."

This cop turned rather red, and, thanks to Swift's efforts, broke the number-one rule of the

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

copper mystery, which is never to *argue*. Because as soon as the public hears a copper argue, and see he's a human being like any other (well, let's be generous), they know he's only a worried man in fancy-dress.

"We're not afraid of trouble," the young cowboy said.

"Oh, no!" cried the Dean, really getting in the groove now. "If there's sufficient of you, certainly you're not. We all remember how you cleared the streets so thoroughly when old B. and K. came here, or Colonel Tito. But if you're a few, and the trouble rises round you, and metal like this lot's flying, you can't take it, and can't stop it! Not here in this dump you can't, anyway. If it was Chelsea or Belgravia, you'd stop it soon enough, maybe. . . ."

Now, all the while he was needling the cowboy, Swift, we both saw, was edging a bit away from him, and throwing a glance or two at Misery and me, who were doing likewise, and suddenly the Dean shouted to me, "Your place!" and pushed the chopper at the copper (handle first, though), and when he backed away a second, we all scattered, and while the Dean lured the law, I managed to make it off with Misery on my Vespa.

I yelled at him as we bowled along: "Our city's dangerous! They don't know it, but our city's getting dangerous!"

"You too!" the Kid cried, as we shot a junction.

"They've got to know it!" I shouted. "We've got to tell them somehow."

"Yeah," Misery answered, as we turned into my alley.

THERE were no signs of anything back home, and I made it up to the first floor and broke in on Mr. Cool. There he was, sure enough, but with one white eye and strips of plaster, and his half-brother Wilf. "Hi!" we all said, and I asked Cool for the fable.

They'd got him, he said, down by Oxford gardens, where he's been visiting his Ma, when they threw burning rags in through the window, and Cool had gone out to make objections. And when the argument developed, his brother Wilf (much to my surprise, I must say) had shown that blood was thicker than prejudice, and sailed out and mixed in on Cool's behalf. A passing cat, who'd turned out, of all things, to be a county councillor, had given them a lift home in his jalopy, and there they both were for all to see.

"Well, what *you* think of all this, Wilf?" I couldn't resist asking the number.

"We ain't seen the end of it," he said rather sourly, "that's all I got ter say."

"The law's losing its grip, if it ever had any," said Mr. Cool. "The two lots are just going where it isn't, and having it out there."

"Surprising!" the Misery Kid said.

"The law never settled much round these parts, any time," said Wilf.

Well, now I had to do a thing I'd already decided, which was make a few telephone calls. So I collected all the fourpennies I could, and went down to Big Jill's, where I found nobody in, but got the key from its hidey-hole in the toilet cistern, and fetched out my pocket diary, and started business on that blower. Because I was determined to call every cat that I could think of, and *tell* them about what was going on.

At the best of times, when you call twenty numbers in a row, as you can do to fix a party, you don't get more than half of them, as is well known. And I only got a quarter — as well as those where I couldn't hack my way beyond the secretary, or even the switchboard starlet. I got V. Partners, who listened patiently, and made some intelligent comments, and said it was disgraceful, and I must get some snaps of it, if I could, for the exhibition. Mannie was out, but Miriam dug at once what I was on about, and said she'd get Mannie over as soon as she'd made contact. I got through to Dido at the Mirabelle, and she said I was a naughty boy to break in on her evening meal, but certainly, she'd tell her editor all I said, and a lot of her best friends were coloured. At the Dubious and Chez Nobody they seemed more interested, and said they'd spread the tale around.

By this time I was running out of pennies, and had to have a summit conference with the operator as to whether I could have all the calls I was entitled to if I put in silver pieces. I drew blank with Call-me-Cobber, which perhaps was lucky, and Zesty-Boy's secretary said she'd see he got the message — yes she'd written it all down. I even called Dr. A. R. Franklyn, who listened carefully, and asked how was my Dad, and said would I please be careful of myself. Then I knocked off Big Jill's meter money from the rubber ash-tray shaped like a bra she keeps it in, and called the Mrs. Dale daily, and asked for Mr. Drove. I got through, much to everyone's astonishment, and told him he might not remember me, but he was a lump of s--t, and I'd do him if I ever saw his face again — whether

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carrying his furled umbrella, or not doing so. I felt better after this, and crash-landed, after the third try, at a session the ex-Deb was having out at Chiswick, and although she sounded raving to me over the blower, she said she'd be right along. I even, as well, thought of trying Suze and Henley at the Cookham place and in the London showrooms, but I skipped it. Of course I tried Wiz, but only got the dialling tone — not even Wiz's woman.

But even with the cats who dug it best, the great difficulty I had was in getting over what was *happening:* I mean, the scale of it, how serious, and that this was supposed to be the British Isles. Because even though most of them had heard *something* of it by now, there seemed to me to be a sort of conspiracy in the air to pretend what was happening in Napoli *wasn't* happening: or, if it was, it somehow didn't signify at all.

I SHOT off after this up to my pent-house, to wash off the mud and blood, and have a lay down for a moment, and a bite. And while I was doing so, there was a little knock, and in on me walked the Fabulous Hoplite. He was looking a bit diminuendo, and smiled rather nervously, and was wearing a beach-gown and his Sardinian slippers.

"My!" he said. "What times we live in!"

"Sit down, beautiful. You can say that again."

"You've been *bruised,* child," he said, trying to grope my tribal scars.

"Hands off the model, Hop," I told him. "How have things been with you?"

The Hoplite got up, spun round so that the beach-gown did a Royal Ballet thing, and sat down again and said, "Oh, no complaints .... But I don't like all this."

"Who does?"

He folded the gown. "I've heard some terrible tales ...."

"Yeah?"

"Oh, yes. *Ecoutez-moi.* The whore at the sweet shop — the skinny bitch — said to me, 'And when my husband got up, he was holding his back, and I saw there was a knife in it'."

"Whose knife?"

"A dark stranger's. Really, darling, I know you love them, but they're so *rough.* And somebody else I know has had thirty-seven stitches in his throat."

"Just like a necklace."

"Oh! Don't be so callous!"

The Hoplite once more arose. "The innocent suffer for the guilty," he said, with a little sigh. "I expect all that most of the serfs who live in this sewer really long for, is just to be left alone — I mean, persons of both tints and textures."

"Yep," I said.

The Hoplite smiled. "But you, dear!" he said. "We all heard you shrieking on the telephone, and isn't what you're doing exactly that? Bringing in a lot of gapers?"

"No," I said.

"No?"

"No. I want witnesses. Friends who will witness this thing, and friends who'll show the Spades this two square miles isn't being written off as a ghetto."

"And you think, sweet, that would improve matters?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Yes. If they saw a few normal, healthy faces around here, it would lower the temperature they're all trying to build up. If the Spades saw a few hundred different kinds of kids who admired them, and the Teds saw a few hundred of the coloured nurses who'll have to stitch them up in hospital, it certainly would make a difference."

"But they're not very *important* people."

"Well, Hoplite, let's bring them in too! This is their big opportunity — the one they've been waiting for to prove their words about the kind of country this is! Let's have some of those public figures who haunt the telly studios, to advise us what to do! Let's have the thinkers of the left and right to tell us how they'd handle this one! Not from their home base, but from here! Let's have the bishops and the ministers, to hold an inter-racial service in the open air! Isn't this their big chance? And let's have the Queen in all her glory, riding through the streets of Napoli, and saying: 'You're *all* my subjects! Each and every one of you's my own!"

I GOT my bend-torch out of a drawer, because it's always best to have a weapon, if you can, whose explanation's innocent, and I got my blood-donor's card in its perspex folder (which I'd got when I started giving the pints after Dr. F. had cured me), because this always seems to impress the law — not much, but just a bit — if they grab you and turn out your pockets, and I stuffed my new passport in my arse pocket as well, I dunno why, just for luck, I suppose. I took up my Rolleiflex, but put it down again, because it didn't seem useful any

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

longer. Then I put on my buckle belt, and a zip jacket that's like a sabre if you swing it by one arm, and went down the stairs where, coming down as well, I ran into Cool.

"You taking the night air too?" I said.

"Yeah. I'll have a look around . . . ."

"Be cool, Cool."

"Oh, sure, white boy."

I stopped the cat before the door, and took both his arms and looked at him, and said, "I hope this isn't going to turn you sour, man."

He smiled (quite rare with Cool). "Oh, no . . . ." he said. "We don't turn sour — we just object."

I slapped his arm, and we both went out into the dark, and this time I'd decided not to take my Vespa. On the pavement, without speaking about this, we shook hands and both went different ways.

THERE'S no doubt night favours wickedness: I mean, I don't think the night's wicked, and I love it, but it opens the trap for all the monsters to come out. I went down by Westbourne Park station, and took a ride along the scenic railway to the Bush. The train was packed with sightseers from the West, who hopped out at different stations for the free display. From the height between the stops, you could see the odd fire and firemen and, at sudden glimpses as the train rocked by a street at right angles, the crowds, and law cars prowling, or standing parked with cowboys packed in them, waiting for action, like bullets in a clip. And when the train halted, at Ladbroke and by Latimer, you could hear loud-speakers blaring something harsh and meaningless, like at Battersea pleasure gardens, in the funfair there. And all along the ride there were patches of blue-black darkness, then sudden glares and flares of dazzling light.

But at the Bush, I was amazed. Because when I crossed over, beyond the Green, to that middle-class section outside our area — all was peace and quiet and calm and as-you-were-before. Believe me! Inside the two square miles of Napoli, there was blood and thunder, but just outside it — only across one single road, like some national frontier — you were back in the world of Mrs. Dale, and What's my line? and England's green and pleasant land. Napoli was like a prison, or a concentration camp: inside, blue murder, outside, buses and evening papers and hurrying home to sausages and mash and tea.

I bought a late night edition by the telly theatre there. They were playing it up — big headlines, no paper can resist that — but also trying to play it down. Reactions from Africa and the Caribbean, it said, had been unfavourable, but much exaggerated. There was a bit of gloating in South Africa and the U. S. South, which, in this difficult situation, was greatly to be deplored. The cardinal fact to remember was that neither at Nottingham — nor even at Notting Hill, so far — had there been any loss of actual life. Meanwhile, a cat at Scotland Yard had issued a message to discourage sightseers. I threw the thing away. The law never wants you to see what it can't handle. Then I went back inside the area again.

I WALKED down an empty street that was lit, as a lot of them are round there, by lamps put up in Queen Boadicea's day, when I saw, coming along, three coloured cats, keeping together. I looked around to see if they were being chased or anything, but they weren't, so I went up and said, "Hi, boys, what's cooking?" — when I saw that one of them had a spanner, it looked to be (anyway, something metal), and they made a rush. Boy, did I gallop! With those three sons of Africa racing after me and hissing! I made for a pool of light, and dodged round some vehicles, and batted across a road straight into Mr. Wiz. "Hold it!" he cried, and the coloured cats saw I had an ally, and melted like a falling gleam. "Boy!" I cried, slapping the old Wiz like a carpet-beater. "Am I glad to see your wicked face! Where the hell have you been, man, I've been seeking for you!" The Wizard took my arm, and said, "Cool it, kiddo," and just round two corners we found ourselves in the middle of a large assembly.

This lot were being addressed by a thing from the White Protection League, whose numbers were also distributing leaflets round the throng. The speaker on the portable platform was a man of quite ordinary appearance — i. e., the kind you'd find difficult to describe if someone asked you after — except that now he was lit up and jet-propelled by a sort of crazy, electric frenzy. He wasn't talking to any*body* — to any human cat you could imagine, even the very worst — but out into space, out into the night to some spirit there, some witch-doctor he was screaming to for help and blessing. And looking up at him, in the yellow-coloured glare, were the white faces he was protecting, all turned, by the municipal lamps above, into a kind of un-washed violet grey.

I nudged Wiz. "He's round the bend," I said.

Wiz didn't answer.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I said he's flipped, boy!" I shouted, above the noise of the loud-speaker.

Then I looked at Wizard. And on my friend's face, as he stared up at this orator, I saw an expression that made me shiver. Because the little Wiz, so tight and sharp and trim and dangerous, had on a little smile, that showed his teeth a bit, and his wiry little body was all clenched, and something was staring through his eyes that came from God knows where, and he raised on his toes, and shot up his arms all rigid, and he cried out, shrill like a final cry, "Keep England white!"

I stood there a moment, while the mob roared too. Then I grabbed Wizard's neck clothes with all the strength I have in my body, and I yanked him round about off balance, and I hit him with all my life behind it, and he stumbled. Then I looked round quick, and saw how it was, and ran.

LUCKILY, I knew Napoli: and I got away easier than I'd hoped and feared. Round by Cornwall crescent, I ran into an area, and stood there, panting. Then I crossed Ladbroke grove, and made it up the rise, keeping along the railings.

Under a light ahead, I saw a peculiar figure: it was an African trader well known round the area, a long, lean old number who runs a little shoplet specialising in imported products that the Spades like for their cuisine. He usually wears an antique suit and a battered Anthony Eden, but tonight he was in his full regalia — I mean, he had on his African robes, and was standing outside his house there, all alone, and waiting.

I went up and said "Hi!" and asked him what the score was. He said this was his home, and his wife and children were inside it, and he didn't want to hurt anyone, but if anyone wanted to damage them, they'd have to have a word with him first. He'd been standing out there all day, and meant to continue standing there, he said, as long as these hooligans were around. I loved the way that old boy said that word, "hooligan!" It came right out of his stomach, and he threw it up through his big lips like it was a nasty mess he was vomiting up. I said to him, "Stick to it, daddy," and I liked his robes, and as soon as I got a chance I was going to Africa to see all the cats wearing theirs like on the travelogues, and from out of somewhere there he fished a panatella for me, and I lit it, and made it up the road again.

Soon I could see lights. So I hurried on, and came on the outskirts of another crowd, and found they were gathered round the Santa Lucia club, which is a B.W.I. clip-joint about as glamorous as an all-night urinal. There were several hundred milling there: and what added joy to the whole scene, was the presence of newsreel and TV cameras, with arc lamps and the odd flare and flashlight, as if the crowd were extras on a movie lot. And directing the whole shot, standing on a car roof with a microphone, was — yes, you've guessed it — Call-me-Cobber. That certainly was the evening of his career — the big scoop, our dauntless reporter right there in the firing line! And as for the Teds and hooligans, well, they can smell a camera, even a Press one, from a mile away, and there's nothing they like better than seeing their moronic faces next morning in the tabloids, so this was their big opportunity as well.

"Child!" shouted someone, and I looked across, and there, standing up in the back of a cream vintage Bentley, was the ex-Deb-of-Last-Year. I struggled across, and found she was with a bunch of Hooray Henries, who seemed, I will say this for them, a bit doubtful if all this was really so dam amusing. And as for the ex-Deb, she leaned out of her vehicle, and said, "That crowd's nothing but a lot of bloody scum."

"You're telling me," I said.

"And what *is* that place?" she asked, waving a hand at the Santa Lucia club.

"A local nitery. You like to take a spin around in there?" I asked — a bit sarcastically, I must admit, because if the yelling crowd outside didn't do you, the Spades down in there, if there were any, most certainly would, if you attempted to get in.

"Certainly!" she cried, and she spoke up a bit loud even for my liking. "I'd love to have a dance with someone African! They're the best dancers in the world!"

So she told me to get in, which I did thinking, "Oh, well!", and the Henry at the wheel got the car up near the entrance, with everyone, when they saw the ex-Deb and the Henries, imagining, I suppose, that this was some item in the television programme. The ex-Deb and I got out, with a Hooray or two in tow, and shouldered down some steps into the basement area, and the ex-Deb banged with both hands on the locked door.

I admit I was petrified, but also so dam hysterical by now the whole thing struck me as quite funny, so I had an inspiration, and went

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the outside can there, and got up on the pedestal, and, taking a chance, I shouted through the ventilator, "Cool, if you're there, let us in, we're customers!" Then we waited a bit more outside the door, and the eye-shutter opened, and there was a noise of bolts and ironmongery, and the door opened eight inches, and we squeezed inside — but not the Hooray numbers, who got barred.

WELL, down in the Santa Lucia club, they were certainly putting up an old troupers' show-must-go-on performance. Because they weren't cowering in corners, or putting up barricades, but hopping around to the strains of the juke-box, and sitting at tables drinking double rums: West Indians, a few G.I.s, and a small herd of brave hens from the local chickery. And all this while, from beyond the walls, that *other* noise that scared them, I hope, less than it did me. A G.I. nine feet high cut me out with the ex-Deb, and I went and fetched two drinks, and the side window crashed, and a petrol bomb came in and rolled among the dancers and exploded, and the electrics all cut out, and there were shouts and screaming.

Then, there was a noise like thunder on the stairs outside, and a crashing and hammering on the door, and by the light of the bomb flare you could see the law rush in, and the fire service, not as if they were coming in to rescue anybody, but to capture an enemy position. Cats were being grabbed, and others weaving in all directions, and I'd lost Suze and the ex-Deb, so I followed a Spade in through the ladies' toilet, and we climbed out the window, and into a dark garden, and over a back wall.

There, this Spade and I, we both stood panting. And I said to him, "Okay, *white trash?*" And he said to me, "Okay, *darkie,*" and it was Cool. We both laughed — Ha! Ha! Ha! — then crept up to somebody's back door, opened it, and tiptoed through the corridor to the front, and out down the steps where a kid was lying groaning, and I shone my torch on him, and I saw blood, and the blood belonged to Ed the Ted.

"Well!" said Mr. Cool.

"Yeah," I said too, and we just left him there, and went round in the street.

AND there, there was a pitched battle. The Teds had got the law hemmed up against the railings — anyway, I suppose they must have been hemmed — and the rest of them were struggling with the Spades and one another, with razors and stakes and bike-chains and iron bars and even, at times, with knuckles. And soon I got scooped into the thing, and I heard a cry, "Nigger's whore!" and through arms and bodies I saw Suze, and they'd got hold of her, some chicks as well as animals, and were rubbing dirt all over her face, and screaming if that's the colour she wanted to be, she'd got it. And I screamed out too, with all my lungs, and I fought like a maniac and couldn't get at her, and next thing I was slugged and staggered, and was vomiting.

Then someone heaved me up, and it was a Hooray Henry, and he said, "Are you all right, old man?" And I said, "No, old chap, and will you for Christ's sake try and get my girl." Well, they had. Some more Hoorays and the ex-Deb had dragged her into the vintage vehicle, and I piled in too, and the Henry at the wheel said, "Where to now?" and I said, "Home!"

It was all I could do to keep them off the premises once we got there, because they were high and the ex-Deb, in particular, wanted to help Suze, but I said, thank you all very much, but would you please all f--k off, and leave us, which they did, and we staggered up, arm in arm, falling all over each other, and there, when we got up to my place, sitting holding his dreadful hat, was my half-brother Vern. "Where you been?" he cried.

I didn't answer, and we both flopped. Vern came over, looked at us, and said, "Your Dad's nearly gone. Ma said you got to come down there right away."

"In a minute, Vern," I said.

Then I kissed Suzette, vomit, and black face, and all.

I CAN'T tell you what I felt, seeing Suze lying there on my bed, where I'd so often thought of her, and I ran back and kissed her till she struggled, then beat it out into the area and early morning.

But in the area, no Vespa! "Good luck to them!" I cried, and started off on foot along the road. I guessed I'd have to make it up to the Gate to get a taxi, and I certainly wasn't going back into the bull-ring to ask any sort of motorist whatever for a lift. So I hoofed it along, and the streets were very quiet, like the silence after the crash of broken glass, and the green trees had the light on them again, and looked fresh and everlasting. Then some cat tried to run me down.

I whipped round, ready to murder this one,

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weak though I was, but who should it be but Mickey Pondoroso, at the wheel of his snazzy C. D. Pontiac. "Mickey!" I cried. "*Buenas dias!* What the hell you doing in this asylum? You been studying some more conditions?"

Well, believe it or not, the diplomatic number had been doing exactly that: touring the area, poking his dam nose in everyhere, and he'd ended spending two hours at the section-house, because there'd been some little arguments over his car — and, would you believe it, too, on whether his dark face was Negroid or not, and this had infuriated the Latin American cat, because apparently his grandma *was* a Spade, and he was very proud of her and of her race, and he had stacks of cousins in the national football team which, I must know, had won the cup this year in 1958, and by God! was going to win it next year too, and those hereafter.

I cut the cat short. "Mickey P.," I said, "you're hired! You're driving me down to Pimlico, please, and it's very urgent."

On the way, I asked Mickey which of the countries that he's been in had the least colour thing of any, and he said at once, "Brazil". And I said, okay by me, the moment I've got the loot, I'm heading it out to Brazilia forever with my bird.

Because, in this moment, I must tell you, I'd fallen right out of love with England. And even with London, which I'd loved like my mother, in a way. As far as I was concerned, the whole dam group of islands could sink under the sea, and all I wanted was shake my feet off of them, and take off somewhere and get naturalised, and settle.

Mickey didn't seem to approve of this, although I'd thought the cat might be flattered. He said once a Roman, always a Roman, and in *every* country there were horrors as well as felicities — that was the word he used.

I said, that what had happened up in Napoli, could happen once again. That once you'd done some people, or group, or race a wicked injury, especially if they were weak, you'd come back and do it again, because that was how it was, and with people, too.

And he said, but didn't I realise these things could happen *any*where?

I answered to this, I didn't mind so much its *happening*. But what I did mind is, that ever since Nottingham, more than a week ago, nobody had reacted strongly: so far as the government and top cats who control things were concerned, these riots might just not have happened at all, or have been in some other country.

Well, he delivered me at the door, and I said farewell, and thanks for the Vespa once again, I don't know what I'd have done without it, and he cut off like Fangio wherever he was going to.

Up by Victoria, I bought a hold-all at a lost luggage, and put in the book and money, and made it to the Air Terminal. Because what with this all, my present feeling was I'd leave Dad's body to Ma, and Suze to get over loving Spades, and me, I was going away for a while, and perhaps not coming back.

At the Air Terminal, all was bustle. I went into the gents, and sorted out the loot which, so far as I could see, sitting counting it on the pedestal, was about two hundred, plus or minus. Then I had a wash, and grabbed my hold-all, and went up to the wicket and asked for a single ticket to Brazil.

Where in Brazil? the cat asked me.

I said, anywhere.

He said, could he see my passport — and I whipped it out, and he said I hadn't got a visa.

I asked him what the hell a visa was, and he said it was a thing you couldn't fly to Brazil without, and I said, okay, where *could* I fly to without a bloody visa? And the cat answered, quite politely, not to South America, but to parts of Continental Europe, I could, so I said okay, give me a ticket to one of those.

The wicket number told me this was the wrong terminal for Europe, I'd have to go up to Gloucester road, and I said, okay, and went out and got a cab, and drove there, and on the way, I'd decided I'd go to Norway, because I'd often heard from seamen Spades that they were nice to them up there.

Well, at Gloucester road, everything easy. They gave me a ticket to Oslo, and by now I was getting crafty, and said how much loot could I export there? and they said up to £ 250, but I'd better get a bit of local currency, so I did that at another wicket, and found I had an hour to wait, so I had a cuppa and a meat pie, and read the morning newspapers.

The Napoli thing was big stuff all right that morning. They had it all over the place, and most of last night's occurrences, and a lot of columns in the leader sections. They were still on about unrestricted immigration, and how unwise it was, just as if it wasn't they who'd

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

allowed it in the first place, and patted themselves on the back for the old mother country's generous hospitality, so long as everything went swimmingly. They said Welfare was an urgent consideration, and what was needed was a lot more experienced welfare officers to iron out awkward misunderstandings. A bishop had said on the radio, Home service, that "various tensions and taboos divide us almost as strongly as those of race and creed in other countries." There'd been some charges made at last, and the magistrate had advised people to stay indoors at night: meantime, the coloureds, it said, were having to get white friends to do their shopping for them. Ministers were going to fly in from the Caribbean, and from Africa, to scan the scene, and the High Commissioner of somewhere had protested. Best news of all — really heartening — was that the cabinet minister in charge of home security had received reports of all these happenings at his country house, and was studying them closely, and said the utmost strictness will be observed in the impartial enforcement of the law. Always 'enforcement': never condemning! As for me, I always thought laws had some idea behind them, some sort of principle, and it was this you should shout out about, not police courts.

WELL, then the loudspeaker said it was all aboard for Oslo, and the strangest bundle of cats you can imagine got in a sort of bubble-coach which was half double-decker, and I sat up in the arse part and surveyed the streets of London as we sped. Good-bye, old town, I said, good luck!

But I hadn't all that time for spectacles, because they fed us into a sort of sausage-machine of escalators and officials, and I had to think fairly quickly, because my idea was, to try and find where the Brazil flight began and, if I could, dodge the Oslo flight, and get on the Brazil one instead. Because experience has taught me that the more highly planned a sausage system is, the easier to feed yourself through the wrong part of it, if you keep your nerves about you.

So we went through the customs, where they seemed surprised I had only a hold-all with a handwritten book in it, but I said I had an auntie out in Norway to look after me. And at the currency check, they said wasn't that a lot of money for so young a feller, and I said, wasn't it just! and got by that one. And at passports, they said was this my first passport, and I said my very first, and how did they like the photo, I'd taken it myself, and didn't I look a zombie?

Then they announced the flight to Rio. I joined the wrong queue, just like I was a regular traveller to there, and we had no check at the exit, nor when we walked across the tarmac to the aircraft, until we met a chick who stood with a board beside the staircase, asking people their names as they got on. I put myself in between a family, hoping they'd think I was cousin Frank or someone, and the chick asked my name, and I pointed at her list to a name she hadn't ticked, and she said, could she have my embarkation card, and I said what embarkation card? and she smiled politely and said one like all these, and so I gave her up mine, and she said, tut, tut, wasn't I a silly boy, that one was for the Oslo flight, and I'd better hurry back or I might miss it.

But I stayed down there, and watched the great plane taking off for Rio. And just as it became airborne — crash! down came the rain in torrents out the heavens, and I held up my arms in it, and opened my mouth and cried, "More! More! More! That'll stop it up at Napoli! That'll do what the ruling olders can't do! That's the only thing to keep the whites and blacks and yellows and blues of Napoli indoors!"

WELL then, just as I was going to get back into the sausage-machine to re-connect with Oslo, in taxied a plane, quite close to where I was standing, and up went the staircase in the downpour, and out came a score or so of Spades from Africa, holding hand-luggage over their heads against the rain. Some had on robes, and some had on tropical suits, and most of them were young like me, maybe kiddos coming here to study, and they came down grinning and chattering, and they all looked so dam pleased to be in England, at the end of their long journey, that I was heartbroken at all the disappointments that were there in store for them. And I ran up to them through the water, and shouted out above the engines, "Welcome to London! Greetings from England! Meet your first teenager! We're all going up to Napoli to have a ball!" And I flung my arms round the first of them, who was a stout old number with a beard and a brief-case and a little bonnet, and they all paused and stared at me in amazement, until the old boy looked me in the face and said to me, "Greetings!" and he took me by the shoulder, and suddenly they all burst out laughing in the storm.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A. J. P. Taylor

Keeping It Dark

Half-Century Secrets

"If he wishes, the layman will be allowed to look at Cabinet records that are 50 years old. That is the effect of a written parliamentary answer by the Prime Minister yesterday. He said that the Queen had approved this decision and that the other party leaders had been consulted. . . ."

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, *3 July*

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY philosophers regarded Balance as the great principle of Nature. Gravitation held the stars in their courses. Plague and famine offset human fertility; if these failed, restraint and vice would take their place. Balance made the British Constitution the most perfect of political instruments. The Balance of Power regulated securely the relations between states. All this has gone now. Everyone talks in extremes from politicians to physicists. World population goes dizzily up until the hydrogen bombs begin to fall, when it will go dizzily down. Nothing is allowed to check the untrammelled working of democracy; and the Balance of Power has become a term of abuse.

In the field of historical research, however, the principle of Balance continues to work. The material for the study of history has increased beyond measure. With this has gone a corresponding increase in the obstacles to its use. Vast staffs are employed to gather historical material; an essential part of their task is to ensure that no historian shall see it. The archivist finds this a congenial labour. Not only does it flatter his vanity to handle documents which no one else can see. He regards all readers as his enemies, disturbing the neat arrangement on his shelves and handling, or often mishandling, his precious hoard. Archivists and librarians would sympathise with the Surgeon-General who told the committee of enquiry at the time of the Crimean war: "Our medical services would be perfectly adequate were it not for the casualties." Every reader is a casualty so far as the archivist is concerned.

It is at once instructive and depressing to turn over the pages of a *Guide to the Diplomatic Archives of Western Europe*, which two American historians, Daniel H. Thomas and Lynn M. Case, have admirably edited (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press). The student is told how to apply for a reader's ticket — sometimes with the assistance of his Ambassador, sometimes by note of hand alone. In France not only must he specify the subject of his research; he must have it approved by a commission of historians. Elsewhere a simple declaration of curiosity may suffice. The *Guide* tells the student when the archives are open — often at singularly inconvenient hours; it advises him which hotels are suitably near, though with the British Record Office the answer is: none. In somewhat summary form, the *Guide* describes what treasures await the eager researcher — files which contain the solutions to innumerable historical problems; the correspondence of Kings and dictators; the secret jottings of prime ministers, and the records of Cabinet councils. The student's mouth begins to water, rather

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the thought of the archives than at the promise of the neighbouring hotels. He rejoices too soon. Eager to complete his form of application, anxious to address the head of the archives with his correct title, the student may overlook the sentence which occurs in reference to every country: "*The records are open only to the year....*"

To when? What is the year when diplomatic records still contain some vital secret for contemporary purpose?

THIS would provide an agreeable guessing-game for a highbrow television programme on the Third Channel, if there ever be one. Six months might be a reasonable period for everything except technical information. No one now, for instance, really cares about the Suez affair; and there would be no explosion even if the documents provided decisive evidence for collusion, which they are unlikely to do. Nor does technical information retain its importance for long. The experts say that Klaus Fuchs will have nothing to tell the Russians now that he has left prison. Still we might stretch a point in favour of secrecy, and offer a couple of years. Those in authority reply: Not enough. The end of the Second World War then? That is already fourteen years ago. No good. The outbreak of that War — twenty years ago? Still no good; not even warm. Desperately we raise the bid. The end of the First World War? Its outbreak? All no good. Finally the archivist displays a grudging generosity. He will let us look at records that are more than fifty years old. This is indeed a strange world, where the Balkan wars of 1912 still provide news too hot to handle. Nor should the student be too impetuous in throwing his hat into the air. The "fifty-year rule" which the archivists of the most enlightened countries claim to observe is a rule of rough-and-ready nature. It operates against the student, never in his favour.

According to the *Guide*, only three countries work the rule genuinely by moving the opening year one forward every twelve months. They are Austria, Belgium, Switzerland; but in Austria "the chronological limit for papers that may be studied only with the consent of the government of Hungary is December 31, 1894". Since this *Guide* was compiled, the British government has said that it accepts the fifty-year rule in principle; though, as with most government statements, there is a difference between theory and practice. A good many countries have got stuck with a year that was once fifty years ago and now retains the attraction of being a neat round figure. Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden are arrested in this way at 1900. France stops oddly at 1 January 1897; or perhaps is now moving forward to 1 January 1898. Italy draws the line at 1870. In Spain, "consultation of documents less than a hundred years old is not permitted." The Vatican, too, observes a hundred-year rule in theory; in fact it has got stuck at 1846.

There is one startling exception to this record of secrecy and suppression. German records of every kind are available in excess to the end of the second World War — not, however, thanks to any enlightenment on the part of the German government. The archives were captured by the victorious Powers. The records have been ransacked, catalogued, microfilmed. This very opulence defeats its purpose; or perhaps achieves it. The *Guide* rightly says: "No scholar could, by himself, sift the evidence on any major problem in the history of Nazi foreign policy."

MANY excuses are offered for the fifty-year rule and its main variants. It is supposed to protect the anonymity of conscientious civil servants and to leave unfettered the brilliant initiatives of foreign ministers. An engine-driver who runs into another train must face public scrutiny; a statesman who runs into the crash of a world war is protected. On a more practical level, the archivist pleads that, if all records were open, there would be too many readers; and to sustain this argument the reading-rooms are kept squalidly small.

One ingenious apologist has suggested

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that fifty years is the period of copyright; and that the state is simply preserving its property like any private author. But of course authors defend their copyright in order to publish; the state does so for the opposite reason. The truth is that all these excuses are a rigmarole of pomposity. No harm would be done to states or individuals if the records were open without restriction, as they are, for all practical purposes, in the United States. But this would destroy the prestige of diplomacy and of the archives themselves. It is more impressive to appear to be protecting guilty secrets than to confess that there are few secrets to defend.

If the fifty-year rule applied in its full rigour, it would indeed be difficult to write the recent history of international relations with any accuracy; and the historian would have to be even more gullible or even more of a muck-raker than he is at present. But there are various loopholes. One is indicated by the *Guide*. Favoured individuals are often allowed access to more recent records. In certain cases, the archivist is himself the favoured individual. The process is easy to imagine. The archivist, as historian, submits an application which is solemnly considered by the archivist as Archivist. Permission is, not surprisingly, given for the projected research; and the completed work is also, not surprisingly, approved.

WARS are conducted with peculiar secrecy while they are on; but they help to pull up the curtain when they are over. How can generals learn how to lose the next war unless they know what happened "last time"? Nearly every country produced Official military histories of the first World War; and every single history reached the remarkable conclusion that the strategical leadership of the country concerned had been impeccable, though no one would suppose so from the result. As a matter of fact, there is an exception. The British volume on Gallipoli is as damning as the story deserves. What has been its reward? The volume has disappeared from the list put out by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

The second World War produced a new variant: official civil histories of the war also. These were to provide guidance for civil servants on the next occasion. The official historians were actually appointed soon after the war began; and they spent their wartime career allegedly watching history in the making.* It is unlikely that such loyal subordinates will detect many failings in their official chiefs; and perhaps even worse when they do — for then the official historian steps forward as one who could have run the war better than those who actually ran it. These civil histories have an odd feature of their own. The military histories at least mention the names of the generals involved, though of course in an adulatory way. The civil histories continue to respect the anonymity of civil servants. As a result, no one ever does things. *It* is always proposed; measures are taken; policies are debated. In some eery way, a whole great war is conducted without a single human being ever making his appearance.

A more direct breach in the secrecy of the archives has been made on a larger scale with the various collections of published documents.

After the first World War, and to some extent after the second, governments felt the need to justify themselves. Editors were employed "of scholarly integrity". Countless volumes were published. These printed volumes enable the historian to do his research at home instead of in the hugger-mugger of the congested reading-rooms. Yet doubts remain: the evidence has been filtered before it comes into the historian's hands. If these volumes truly reveal everything, then there is no reason why the archives themselves should not be open; if they do not reveal everything, they are a fraud on the public. The fraud may not be conscious: the editor may be conscientiously doing his best. But he is one man with one

* The Americans even did this with their military histories; and appointed a historian as Admiral so that he could watch history being made in the Pacific. We only need historians actually in command to be back at Julius Caesar.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man's point of view. He follows his own interest and includes the documents relevant to the book which he himself will later write. Besides, he works in privileged conditions and will probably end up with a knighthood or other decoration. It would be against natural law if the editor of diplomatic documents were alone exempt from the corruption which privilege brings with it.

In the past there has been another loophole. Statesmen used to carry off their private correspondence and, with it, an indiscriminate mass of public papers. The biographer then discovered many things which were still concealed from the official historian. This loophole is now being closed, in England at any rate. The instrument is the Official Secrets Act; and its wielder is the Cabinet Office. The Official Secrets Act was directed against junior officials. It was provoked by a clerk in the foreign office who purloined the secret Anglo-Russian agreement of 1878 and published it in the *Globe*. For many years, no one thought of using it against cabinet ministers. Individual departments would not act against their own chiefs; and there was no body to enforce collective responsibility. This changed when the Cabinet got its own secretariat in 1916. These officials were meant to keep the minutes of the last cabinet meeting and to arrange the papers for the next one. But the secretariat soon took on a life of its own, as such bodies often do. It came to regard itself as the permanent part of the Cabinet and set out to guard its secrets.

The process took some time. Lloyd George, who cared nothing for officialdom though he had created the Cabinet secretariat, carried off all his records of Cabinet proceedings and published great extracts from them in his *War Memoirs*. No one dared to prosecute him. But the Cabinet office had its revenge. The official Military History of the first World War was being published under its authority; and the editor was allowed to conduct, in its pages, a polemic against the man who won the war. Lloyd George had demonstrated from the published figures that the British losses at Passchendaele were greater than the Germans, as indeed one would expect. The official historian laboured first on the German and then on the British figures with such success that his "revision" finally showed the reverse. This was certainly a curious process. A public servant, paid for with public money, was being employed to "debunk" the greatest prime minister of the twentieth century.

As time passed, the Cabinet secretariat grew bolder. After the fall of the Labour government in 1931, the former ministers wished to defend their conduct and in particular to answer the not unjustified charge that the majority of the Labour cabinet had agreed to a cut in the rates of unemployment relief. They were forbidden to quote from the records. George Lansbury had certainly not agreed to the cut; on the contrary he had put forward constructive proposals of quite a different kind — and his papers proved it. On his death during the second World War, the Cabinet secretariat threatened his biographer with the penalties of the Official Secrets Act. He allowed officials to examine Lansbury's papers. Whereupon they carried off not only the copies of the Cabinet minutes and the drafts of proposals which Lansbury had submitted, but most of his private papers as well, including even files of the *Daily Herald*.

Private papers ought to be the great security against official secrecy. A man's private letters remain his personal property even though he happened to be Prime Minister when he wrote them. Winston Churchill had it clearly in mind to write a best-selling history as soon as the war was over; and therefore transacted all important business by private letter so as to be safe from the censorship of the Cabinet office. A new peril has now arisen with the recent habit of depositing private letters in Colleges or public libraries. The habit is, in itself, admirable. Private houses are not well designed for the preservation of records. Palmerston's papers were used as fuel when

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Broadlands was in military occupation during the war; Salisbury's papers lay in damp heaps on the floor of an unheated room. But at least these rotting and combustile papers were beyond the reach of the Cabinet office. Public libraries are a different matter. The librarians are respectful of authority and fearful of the Official Secrets Act. If they stand out, what chance is there for a future O.B.E.? The Cabinet secretariat plausibly suggest that it is no service to scholarship for private papers to be accessible when official records are closed. The unwary historian, gullible and innocent, will be lamentably misled. The librarian will be doing his duty to learning by enforcing his own "fifty years' rule". The librarian needs little prompting. Always eager to lock the cupboard, he can now do so with official approval.

The Cabinet office have been particularly adroit in dealing with so-called Cabinet papers which passed into private hands. Here, they claimed, the fifty-year rule did not apply. Cabinet papers are Crown property and must remain secret for ever. Gladstone's papers, for example, had been long settled at Hawarden, where they were used by many historians. They were then deposited in the British Museum in the mistaken belief that historians would use them more. Instead, the Cabinet secretariat descended; abstracted Gladstone's casual jottings on the backs of envelopes which were all the record the Cabinet had in its day; and placed them under the seal of the Official Secrets Act. The authorities of the British Museum cravenly acquiesced. Recently the secretariat has slipped a bit. It has reluctantly agreed that the fifty-year rule shall apply even for Cabinet papers. But it has exacted a price in return. In case after case the owners of private papers have accepted the fifty-year rule for their own collections. The historian who thinks, for example, that he is in for an easy run with the papers of Asquith, Milner, or Neville Chamberlain had better think again. The fifty-year rule started as a measure of emancipation: nothing was to be secret if it was more than fifty years old. It is becoming increasingly a measure of restriction: everything must remain secret until it is fifty years old.

The private owner ought to defy the fifty-year rule. It cannot conceivably apply to anything except official papers. But defiance needs persistence and strong nerves. From the historian's point of view the best thing, perversely enough, is that papers should leave the country; then they are beyond the range of the Official Secrets Act. Lord Beaverbrook has shipped off the papers of Bonar Law, Lloyd George, Curzon, and others, to the University of New Brunswick. As a result these statesmen will get more than their fair share of attention from the historian. An even quainter situation has been created by Sir William Wiseman, who has deposited his papers in the House collection at Yale; for these papers contain copies (sent over for Wiseman to show to House) of war Cabinet and other records during the first World War — papers which it would be a criminal offence to publish in this country. But there they are at Yale, available to anyone who cares to ask for them. American historians have used them; and have published books containing quotations from them. The English agent for these books (usually a University Press) presumably commits an offence by importing them into this country. It is a great disappointment to me that no prosecution has taken place. American historians who are ransacking the papers of F. D. Roosevelt and Truman would have the true nature of British freedom brought home to them if they were sent to prison for quoting the papers of Lloyd George.

British practice is pompous and silly. It is by no means alone. The French, also famed as lovers of liberty, are even sillier. The treatment accorded to the records of the *Résistance* is especially entertaining. At the end of the war many patriotic Frenchmen were anxious to assemble a full record of the underground opposition in order to show that France, too, had something to be proud of during the second World War. Resistance does not easily lend itself to written record. On the contrary, it is a secret affair, the less written about the better.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

However the former Resisters went industriously to work. Every scrap of evidence was collected. Files of illegal newspapers were pieced together. Thousands of Resisters wrote their personal recollections. And where should this great treasure-hoard be deposited? Obviously in the archives of each *département*. So it was. And the moment that this had happened: Clang! down came the immutable rule of every departmental archive in France that nothing deposited there can be consulted by the public for fifty years. The authorities, many of them former servants of Vichy, can see the records. The Resisters who assembled them and whose story they contain are not allowed to study their own doings. But why not? If the fifty-year rule has any sense, it surely follows that no public man should be allowed even his own memory until fifty years have passed. Fortunately the memory of most public men is very bad; so there is no need to prosecute them for harbouring "dangerous recollections".

This is a sad story, and a pointless one. Real secrets are few and far between; discreditable secrets even fewer. The object of seeing all the records is to grasp the true working of the historical process.

Take a single instance: British policy in the Czech crisis of 1938 which culminated in the conference at Munich. We know from the published foreign office papers that many British statesmen did not like the Czechs and from Chamberlain's letters that he genuinely hoped to satisfy Hitler. But how far were these emotional responses stimulated by the strategic facts? What did the chiefs of staff tell the Cabinet? Did they insist that Great Britain was too weak to fight? Did they, on the other hand, draw attention to the military loss which the destruction of Czechoslovakia would imply. Perhaps they told the Cabinet nothing, either because they were not asked or because they had nothing of interest to tell. In any case the answers — now perfectly harmless — would enable us to assess British policy which we cannot do at present. It is really an absurdity that, while we know what the French General Staff said and what British and French ministers said to each other, we do not know what British ministers said among themselves. The same is true about the guarantee to Poland a year later. Did the British government ever enquire how they were going to implement it? And if not, why not?

This secrecy is not a service to the public. It is not even a service to governments or to ministers. It thwarts the spirit of democracy, which is, no doubt, why officials seek to maintain it. It will go in time, if democracy survives at all. The American rule is to have no secrets; the Russian is to keep everything secret. I am on America's side in this, as in nearly everything else. Our rulers follow their usual practice: American in talk, Russian in action. Meanwhile the contemporary historian should tell the public that he cannot do his job properly. All our work is provisional and will have to be revised as the rule breaks down. There are compensations on the other side. Guessing is more fun than certainty; and the fifty-year rule places the contemporary historian in the same state of happy speculation as the historian of earlier times is in from the physical destruction of most of his evidence. Besides, most historians hate writing; and what excuse would be left for not writing if all the evidence were really before them?

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paul Ignotus

Exile in London

I CAME to England for the first time in the winter of 1938-9, on false pretences. I called myself a journalist. Indeed I had always been a journalist and tried to carry on in London, after taking refuge from the Nazi terror which was beginning to grip Hungary. But in London the terror was a thing to be ignored. My status as a refugee had to be forgotten. A movement to ignore obvious facts was current all over Europe.

The country from which I came, and the one in which I was to settle, and the two which allowed me to cross their territories could all assume that Hungary was an independent and constitutional monarchy, though in fact she was already a German satellite. Her ruling oligarchy was appropriately headed by an admiral of the old Habsburg Monarchy, a handsome old gentleman who spoke several languages but read none. His name was Miklós (Nicholas) vitéz ("the brave") Horthy de Nagybánya. Social snobbery turned his admiration towards the old Hungarian and Austrian aristocracies, and also towards England which had the oldest aristocracy and most powerful navy. But the people he really trusted were small noblemen, the landed gentry and privileged bureaucrats. They disliked and imitated the Nazis. The parliamentary façade of Hungarian life with all its commercial and humanitarian benefits had to be kept up. Except for the Communists, no political party was outlawed. The legal fiction of Hungary left no reason for anyone to leave the country on account of race, creed or political leanings; but the cleavage between law and facts widened day by day. A growing number of refugees left the country, pretending they went for health, business, or a holiday. One of the common pretexts was journalism, and I chose that. It was natural for my Government to pretend to believe me.

As a refugee, I had to accept the strange attitudes I found. In a way it was comfortable. I could call at the Hungarian Legation with the politeness of an accredited newspaper correspondent and share the friendly feeling many of the staff there felt towards the West. I was able to maintain regular correspondence with my relatives and friends in Budapest. On the other hand, this meant a lower status than the declared refugees enjoyed. Jews from Germany, democrats from Italy, Republicans from Spain and all the rest had their relief centres. They had a legal right to live as beggars in political exile. Crypto-refugees were merely unauthorised beggars.

THE Hungary which I had left behind was a false but enchanting country. Her independence, her Constitution and her tax returns were all false. It was a Paradise for spivs, as they would later have been called in London. But the national genius allowed even decent people to live quite merrily in Hungary. Statisticians might show that a great part of the population, chiefly the landless peasantry, was practically starving. This was roughly true, but they had their own ways of managing. The county magistrates and police, known for their harshness, did not much bother about minor offences so long as their own authority was not challenged. Life was often humiliating rather than unpleasant, and it had a certain bucolic appeal.

The capital, my native city, Budapest, was false on a more splendid and enlightened scale. Its situation, with its fine bridges over the broad river Danube, and the proud Gothic monuments from the end of the last century, made it one of the most spectacular spots of Europe.

It struck the visitor at first as extremely beautiful but seemed dreary and tasteless after an exploratory stroll over its ordinary residential areas; a more intimate knowledge of its people

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and surroundings was needed to discover that it was permeated with charm after all. Its cafés, night clubs and restaurants were excellent. Apricot brandy in the restaurants and night clubs was appreciated by the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales. The cafés had different merits. They were the fountain of illicit trading, adultery, puns, gossip and poetry. They were also the origin of Hungarian liberty. In 1848 a group led by the twenty-six year old poet, Petöfi, set out from the café Pilvax to march against the bastions of absolutism and feudalism and succeeded for a while in overthrowing them. In a less rhetorical way the cafés had been since then the meeting places for the intellectuals and those who opposed oppression. When there was a Free Press they were almost its editorial offices, and when there was no Free Press they made up for it. In the inter-war period, a limited number of Government and Opposition newspapers and magazines could be printed. Ten times a year, however, and with various obstacles, magazines without any official backing could also be published. It was a corrupt and happy-go-lucky society, vulgar in some respects, sophisticated, often astoundingly naïve.

In the late thirties, Hungary had become a chaos of ideas and sentiments. Impressed by Mussolini and Hitler, many people became thoroughly reactionary and believed themselves to be revolutionary. On the criss-cross map of muddled slogans and competing trends, any social vision had its proper place. Even Communism, arch-enemy of the existing régime, was allowed among the revolutionary currents in mid-stream. Only one point of view received no sympathy—the "old-fashioned Left-wing". No young man with an eye to his career would hold such out-dated views as the Liberals, Radicals or Social Democrats.

I was an old-fashioned Social Democrat, a liberal and bourgeois radical. I was an editor of the unrecognised, unregistered journal *Szép Szó* which had undertaken the impertinent task of opposing the slogans of Nazis and of Horthy's anti-Nazis equally. We kept an old-fashioned left-wing flag flying, and made our appeal chiefly to the young men. The importance of my position in Hungary was negligible; yet I can boast of having been, for a few months in the late thirties, the most unpopular person in my country. When my name was mentioned at Nazi meetings, it had longer and louder *boos* than any other. The Government's anti-Nazis disliked me no less. I was in their view the Great Nuisance. I had always kept away from Communism, which I truly disliked; and so my person had to be protected, so long as the legal fiction was preserved. The only thing they could want me to do was disappear from the country.

I enjoyed neither high income nor high social status, but I had a special gift for irritating people. What Baudelaire called "the aristocratic pleasure of displeasing" had always appealed to me no less than the democratic virtue of standing up for conventional ideals. On top of this, I was of Jewish extraction and therefore an object for "Turanian" as well as "Aryan" racial attacks.

My farewell was typical. I did not travel as a refugee, so there was no trouble in getting a passport and even, as a journalist, a free First Class ticket to the frontier. Except for aristocrats and very wealthy people, only those who had free tickets used to travel First Class: members of Parliament, senior civil servants, and journalists. The guard gave a soldier's salute to First Class passengers when he came into their carriage. As far as the frontier I had noble treatment. At the frontier an official looked at my passport and noticed by my name the symbol marked on the documents of people suspected of Communism or other subversive activities: the year of issue stamped after the name. Everyone knew what that meant, but the police had never explained why this could be found in some passports and not others. The official buffeted me out of the train. In a dark place I was stripped and searched, and all my luggage thrown to pieces. As nothing "illegal" was found, the frustrated guard shouted at me angrily to hurry up . . . I thought it better not to argue. I was glad it was over. It was fortunate that he had not troubled to read my notes. One dependable merit in a police state is that the police hate reading. I had ample opportunity to discover this later, in another and even more stupid police state, as a prisoner of Stalin and Rákosi.

CLEARLY I had to leave Hungary, but why choose England? I thought of France as my second home and it would have been natural for me to stay there. I knew French fluently and had a number of friends there. It had always attracted me more than any country except my own; but at that moment this made me the more disappointed with her. Paris seemed to suffer already from a spirit of defeat. All that I admired there seemed to be falling to pieces. I hardly knew a word of English, and no more of England than did any tolerably educated man

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in my country. I had an admiration for her traditions and social achievements, but no acquaintance with particular qualities I witnessed later. My decision to settle there was partly from a wish to try something of which I knew nothing. For that matter I could have tried the North Pole. A North Pole with central heating would have been perfect, I thought. It did not turn out that way. But for all the strangeness and despite my thoroughly continental taste and character, I found myself at ease among English people.

Even in my humble position it was reassuring to find that people did not tell lies. When I tried to get work as a hotel porter, or an invitation to write a book about Hungary, "I am afraid I can't encourage you" was the unvarying reply. In other countries I would have been rudely turned away or greeted with enthusiasm but no commitment. I found it a blessing to live among people on whose word I could rely. It would not be easy, I felt, to get them to do something; but once they had agreed, they would not abandon me. "There is no need to despair about them," I said to my father, Hugo Ignotus, who was also by then a crypto-refugee in London. Thirty years before, he had been the leading essayist and editor in the Hungarian intellectual renaissance; politically, one would have called him an advanced Liberal. He, too, had felt he could no longer risk living in Hungary. Brought up in the Victorian age, he could not help being more worried about our insecurity than I was. "No doubt the English do not tell you lies", he answered sadly. "They promise nothing but they do keep their promise."

I LIVED by the Thames in South East London, facing the City, on the ground floor. From my window I saw cranes, boats, lorries, St. Paul's, smoke and sky. Next to me stood the cottage from which Sir Christopher Wren used to watch the workmen carrying out his plans on the other side of the river. I was surrounded by wharves, breweries, and historical remains. This was Southwark, the most provincial quarter of metropolitan London. It is a working-class district so ancient as to seem exclusive, almost aristocratic. Its intruders, its parvenus, were the handful of gentlefolk, attracted by its romantic atmosphere or proletarian smell, who chose to live there.

I tried to make friends with as many of the indigenous residents as possible, partly in order to learn English. "For Heaven's sake," a friend told me, "don't do that! You'll pick up a Cockney accent and be lost." More lost, I asked, than if I stuck to my Magyar accent? "Far more," my friend replied. "There is nothing wrong in not knowing English in England; but to know it in the way of an English navvy is shocking." I appreciated the wisdom of his advice but trusted the virulence of my Magyar accent. The small boys and girls playing on the embankment knew me, and on fine summer evenings a few would gather under my window. I gave them sweets, which made me more popular than I had hoped; they would talk to me for hours. This was too much of an evening lesson in children's Cockney. "Well, goodbye now, I'll go and have my dinner." They stared at one another; "'e means 'is *supper*," a boy explained. He was right; my meal could not be called a dinner. Except when I was asked out, my rule was never to have a square meal. I lived on scrambled eggs, which I concocted myself, and on mild-and-bitter and cold meat pie. Half consciously I knew I chose this diet because I did like scrambled eggs and found mild-and-bitter with cold pie stylish; three-course hot meals at the A.B.C. might have cost less but I had a happy instinct which stopped me from adding it up.

The little three-storey house in which we lived has since been destroyed by the Blitz. Its arrangements showed a somewhat archaic taste; the bathtub stood in the kitchen, and the lavatory in a tiny courtyard. I found it most attractive. It had fair proportions, and a modest but respectable air. I suspected it had been a brothel or gambling house once; not the actual building perhaps, erected only about one hundred and fifty years before, but its predecessor from which it inherited narrow passages leading from surprising corners in surprising directions. In Puritanical days, Southwark used to be a centre for crime, art and gaiety; the merchants of the City of London used to cross the river, as they would cross the Channel in Victorian decades, to indulge a love for beauty or for making love, forbidden in their own business and family surroundings. The secret passages served as emergency exits when the houses were raided.

I knew I had hard times to face. I was already 38; it is not easy for a man to start a new life at that age. Besides, I had always been incompetent in money matters and non-technically minded. The only possible prospect was to remain a parasite until I knew English well enough to experiment in journalism.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My only comfort in this gloomy position was the delight of irresponsibility. Since childhood I had wished, at least for a while, to be an orphan or tramp with no commitments. I could never afford that: though a bachelor, I had relatives and felt certain links with respectability. The approaching victory of Nazism had convinced me that in Hungary I could no longer help my family. So a plague had liberated me, but liberty it was and I enjoyed it. My beggar's life was full of illuminating adventures.

These started with the charming people whose hospitality I was enjoying in Southwark. They were an old English upper-middle-class family whose interests lay in business, socialism, and books. Many of them married foreign girls, a ravishing Hungarian among them; hence my friendship with her husband. When I had to leave Hungary I asked her in an embarrassed letter whether I could count on their friendship if I were to make an excursion to London. "We cannot offer you much," the reply was, "but if you have use for a little room, empty at the moment, which I should be glad to furnish by the time when you move in. . . ." Indeed I had use for it.

I was their third lodger. The first floor was inhabited by a slim pretty girl who was always dressed in slacks and whose enthusiasm was divided among mushrooms, beer and men. In her rooms I first met Mr. Zilliacus, and in her rattling little car I first saw the East End docks. She wanted to show me slums but did not find any. Then we entered a pub where she was sure she would find revolutionaries but there was none of them either. But we found shuv'ha'penny—a great discovery after my limited experience of darts in the *Anchor* on Bankside.

On the second floor, or garret, Michael lived. He was about my age, the brother of my friend who rented the house. Michael was the black sheep of his family, except that it was a family where black sheep were unimaginable, because of their high liberalism under which the blacker a sheep the more sympathetic he might be. The rest had some leanings towards Communism; he was a Communist, very pure and simple. He had fought in the International Brigade. He was anti-*bourgeois*, body and soul. He ran about naked in the house because, "why not?"; he had no prejudices. He liked meat and vegetables for breakfast, always dressed shabbily, and had a boyish face.

"Hello Paul, come and have a pint of mild-and-bitter with me." This was my first invitation from him, as spokesman of the English working-class revolution, to explore proletarian life. It was he who first took me to the *Anchor*. This Public House is now polished and carefully maintained as a historical monument. Then it was more humble, though the proprietor knew its connections with Dr. Johnson. Young workmen in caps lingered by the bar, talking about football pools, singing occasionally and playing darts. Michael was on Christian-name terms with them. "Why not have a shot at it, Paul? Great fun," he told me. I tried to throw darts, and was clumsy even for a beginner. Michael's clumsiness was second only to mine but we enjoyed it. "Pleasant fellows, these workmen," I whispered to him. "Do you know them well?" He smiled proudly. "Very well indeed. All good comrades." He said good-bye to them with a clenched fist according to Popular Front ritual. They did not seem to mind it; nor did they think of reciprocating it.

I never concealed from Michael my scepticism about Russian socialism. I agreed we should support the idea of a Popular Front, and an alliance between the Western Powers and the U.S.S.R. This allowed him to treat me too as a good comrade, chiefly because he liked to treat as comrades the people he liked; and he was happier greeting people with clenched fists than arguing with them. What I liked in Michael and his family was their liberalism—a quality which in Russia would have been impossible, and which they were about to bury with shouts of triumph. Knowing I was a progressive writer and a refugee from Fascism they assumed I must share their sympathetic interest in the Russian way of life. Now and then I felt I should say how much I preferred them to their ideals. But I felt it would be too rude and I kept quiet.

One night I was struck by Michael's voice as he chatted vigorously with a woman under my window. Later, as my light was still on, he came in, excited as I had seldom seen him. "Good God, Paul, such idiots!" he panted. "Those chaps in the Foreign Office: imagine *me* having Cassado in this house! That traitor!" I do not know whether the English reader remembers the name. Colonel Cassado was an officer in the Spanish Republican army who contrived, with some support from the British and the French, to turn out Negrin's Popular Front Government towards the end of the Civil War. His aim was a compromise agreement with Franco. The approach was rejected, and Cassado had to go into exile. Now he was in Lon-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don. I could not understand at first from Michael's excited narrative just what the lady had said, but he repeated it in detail. A woman from the Foreign Office, who knew Michael as a fellow resident in Southwark, had greeted him. "You fought in Spain and you're a good anti-Fascist, aren't you?" she began. She wondered whether a refugee from Franco's Spain could be taken into his house. She had an excellent candidate for it, a Colonel Cassado.

"I hope you weren't rude to that good soul," I told Michael.

"Well, I lost my temper but I don't think I was rude. I just told her there was no question of having a traitor to live among honest people. If there were any genuine Republicans needing to be helped, we would do what we could. Some workers or something of that sort. She understood and didn't seem hurt. She said she would let me know if there were any."

About a week later the good comrades arrived, an enchanting couple. The man was Pedro, a tailor whose right hand had been crippled in the fighting. He could not be a tailor again, but would learn English in London and then find work on a farm. He was a short and vivid man, with broad gestures and glittering eyes, a satisfactory socialist for Michael. On May Day when he saw how few London workers marched under the red flag he felt embittered. After a Fascist gathering at the street corner he came home quite pale, unable to understand how British workers could tolerate the impertinence of tyrants. When he found from a newspaper that H. M. Government was about to recognise Franco he cried that life was *merda*. Neither he nor his wife was impressed by freedom in Britain; what is all this freedom worth if you aren't allowed to kill Fascists? I tried cautiously to explain the British way. "Don't you really like anything in this country?" I asked them.

"We do. Chocolate."

Pedro's wife was called Maria. She was a tall, tired-looking woman with beautiful features; a long dark face, half Madonna, half Gipsy. She sang Spanish songs delightfully, especially Flamenco. In spite of my agnosticism I wanted to hear her sing some religious songs. I was careless enough to suggest this, and to add coyly that Catholicism suited women. I got a sharp protest from the two of them. No such nonsense among Spanish work-people. Women, Pedro explained, were by nature *materialista*, and religion, which was but a collection of superstitions inherited from the Middle Ages, suited them even less than men. I was out-voted.

They had a room next to mine on the ground floor. There was no difficulty in putting them up; but Maria took the kitchen under her care and it had to be quickly revolutionised, or rather counter-revolutionised. Until then nobody had much cared who might be taking a bath there while someone else was at the stove—"why not?", we were untroubled by *bourgeois* prejudices. But some came in with the good comrades from Spain. A curtain was drawn round the bath-tub. While Michael bathed inside, and Maria prepared the meal outside, Pedro would anxiously watch the curtain and pull it now and then, nervous of gaps.

Then we would sit down in the kitchen to our common meal, *tortilla* or something of the kind; the girl from the first floor in slacks, Pedro, Michael and myself. Maria would stand by and wait on us, and eat when we had finished. "Why not join us?" the three of us asked. O no, that was impossible. *Sothialista, materialista,* a decent woman would not sit down with men. Of course, we also continued our excursions to the *Anchor*. Maria came with us as far as the threshold and then ran home. We could never persuade her to enter.

Co-existence based upon charity is likely to be irritating. We could not but feel aware that the lady on the first floor, and Michael in the garret, were our aristocrats. Not that they stuck together, far from it. Two aristocrats were too many for such a small community. Irritable scenes would break out between them, and I tried occasionally to make peace; then they both started disliking me. In the end, despite ignorance of the language, the Spanish couple and I discovered that we were linked more intimately to each other than to our hosts.

In our Southwark Spanish we could talk, though more with our hands than our tongues. I would sit and chat with Pedro in the kitchen, Maria standing next to his chair, through evenings when the others were out. On one occasion I happened to mention Cassado as a traitor. Pedro pressed my hand and asked in a tone of serious intimacy, "Pablo, truly why do you think Cassado is a traitor?" I had never thought carefully about it; it seemed to be assumed among Republicans. "Listen, at a time when everything was lost he tried to save lives. Is that treachery?" Maria joined in, leaning over her husband's shoulder. She described, or rather recalled by acting, what the end of the Civil War had been like. *Boom-boom,* she said, bombs had been falling everywhere. "Negrin?" With

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her slim fingers she showed on the table how he had run away. "Del Vayo?" The same performance with her fingers on the table. "Passionaria?" Again the same. "*Pedro y yo?*" She showed with gestures how helplessly she and her husband had just stared up at the sky. Cassado had not managed to save much but still a handful of people owed their lives to him. Maria and Pedro were among them. Was it wicked to be grateful for it? I agreed it was not.

Pedro had been advised to say he was a Communist in this house. Pedro had tried to explain to the Foreign Office people that he was *sothialista* but no *communista*. The answer was he must not be so fussy. Was there really much difference between the two?

I was sorry my vocabulary in Southwark Spanish was not rich enough to let me tell Pedro and Maria what I felt. Despite differences of social background and nationality, and also of approach, I felt they were really my best comrades.

BY THE outbreak of the war Pedro and Maria had already got their permanent abode on a farm, and the lady in slacks from the first floor and Michael from the garret had also moved elsewhere. The lease of the house was nearly at an end but I stayed on there for a while. I could not afford labour to black-out the windows, and was incompetent to do the job myself; so I spent some of the autumn evenings strolling in the streets, or trying to read in the pubs, or sitting and staring from the window of my unlighted room. A lady who lived near discovered my loneliness and invited me to tea. I gladly accepted and we became good friends. She was a middle-aged spinster, with a pleasant house on the embankment and a factory job which she liked. She was an old Southwark resident and knew much about the people round about. Her middle-class pride was fascinating. She held strong opinions and would add, "everybody thinks so: thinking people, I mean, not working people, of course." She was very frank. "Your friends . . ." and she shook her head, "playing the fighters for freedom and then letting you down like that. Shocking." "But why do you say they let me down?" I asked. "They were very kind to me while they were living here, and I am grateful. Why should it be their duty to look after me when they are busy somewhere else?" I was unable to convince her. She also confessed that she had viewed me at first with suspicion for being mixed up with them, but had later discovered that I was not so bad after all. A foreigner, no doubt; but at least one of the thinking people, and a decent fellow as far as she could see. Again, I intervened on behalf of my vanished friends. Weren't they decent English people? She jumped. "Those, *English?* Those, *decent?* My God, their behaviour. A woman running about in slacks. A man calling everybody by his Christian name after seeing him for no more than a minute. Everybody was shocked."

"The thinking people, you mean? Not the working people?"

"O, they didn't differ about *that*. Charwomen and all would complain about them. No one could understand what made them think of coming to this district. They should go to Bloomsbury with those habits. But behave like that here! The workmen and their wives were simply disgusted. Thank God we've got rid of them. Now at last we feel we are among ourselves."

Amongst working people, she meant, as well as thinking people.

I TRIED to volunteer for the forces but had no qualification as an officer and was not allowed to serve in the ranks. In the early spring of 1940 I was given work with the B.B.C., where I stayed until the autumn of 1947; first as a translator-typist, later as Hungarian Intelligence Assistant, and after the war as a Hungarian Programme Assistant.

During the war my main vocation at the B.B.C. was to criticise the Hungarian department. The B.B.C. foreign news services were excellent on the whole, but the Hungarian broadcasts were atrocious. The main speaker was a Great Friend of Hungary, an Oxford scholar who assured Hitler's Hungarian associates, in very strange Hungarian syllables, of his sympathetic interest. Though my own efforts to get him off the air were futile, Mr. Eden later intervened to that effect; but this alone was not sufficient to save the Hungarian programmes from dullness.

I am much indebted to the B.B.C., and not least for having had Miss Margaret Lambert, at that time South-East Europe Intelligence Officer, as my chief. She shared much of my political concern and suggested I should talk with one or two political writers or members of Parliament. "Why not talk to Professor Seton-Watson?" And she rang him. "I wonder whether I could ask you to see my Hungarian assistant, Paul Ignotus. . . ." — "I shall be delighted," the late Professor replied. "I know his father who

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a very distinguished writer." Miss Lambert was impressed. Shortly afterwards, when I was with her in Oxford, she rang Mr. Wickham Steed who had his country house in the vicinity. "I wonder whether I could come and see you and bring with me my Hungarian assistant, Paul Ignotus? You may know his father ..." "His father?" Wickham Steed exclaimed. "His *grandfather*!* He wrote the most beautiful German."

Professor Seton-Watson and Mr. Wickham Steed were fine men but I cannot say that my acquaintance with them took me very far. They were the Great Friends of Czechoslovakia. Thanks to the Masaryk heritage, this implied a more liberal approach to human problems than the conventional sort of sympathy at that time for my own country. But it was outdated liberalism; they were almost as easily ready to condone Petty-Entente nationalism as the Great Friends of Hungary were to exonerate Hungarian nationalists.

Through Miss Lambert I got in touch with the *New Statesman* circle and the Union of Democratic Control. She was far from seeing eye to eye with them about everything. As a Whig, of course, she could not. "But you see," she would say, "they are still the ones who understand most of what it is about. You must talk to them." I started contributing to the *New Statesman*, first with short anonymous notes, during the war. In the series of documents published by the U.D.C. on various foreign policy subjects, the Hungarian one was based on my draft. In my eagerness to put my sentences in good English I called the *Cordon Sanitaire*, in my original manuscript, "Sanitary Belt." This was received with cheers by the Committee discussing my suggestions but deleted from the final version, along with some other East-European mental sparks of mine which were not reckoned suitable for the purpose.

In this way I first met Kingsley Martin, Richard Crossman, John Freeman, Norman Mackenzie, Dorothy Woodman, who was then the Secretary of the U.D.C., and dear old Mr. Brailsford and others whose friendship I have had every reason to cherish—though I have often felt that in its policies the *New Statesman* can be oddly adolescent.

Among all my *New Statesman* friends it is with Kingsley that I felt the most long-lasting and most inarticulate link. Really it was he who, probably without realising it, set me rolling on the tracks of English journalistic and literary life. I felt he was full of understanding and sympathy for me; but not for my point of view, particularly in the course of personal talks. I had and have a tremendous admiration for him but could chat with most of his associates and lieutenants more easily than with him. I often wondered why. I suspect that for all his passionate internationalism and his willingness to criticise his own country he is more English than anyone I knew, not only in Bloomsbury but even in Yorkshire or Somerset. His approach is insular and global. He is interested in his garden, and the people in the local pub, and the misery-stricken areas in India and the Congo, and the survival of the human race. I do not think he is much interested in Europe. He is a good European only because he writes well. It struck me as typical that those of his writings which impressed me most deeply were obituaries on personalities almost as thoroughly English as himself—Mrs. Webb and Mr. Chamberlain. With tact and grace and tender irony, he depicted on such occasions the genius and idiosyncrasies of what was perhaps most overwhelmingly British in Britain, the Victorian English upper middle-classes. When I congratulated him on this he made me think I had not properly understood his writings, and he may have been right. But this did not prevent us from being friends and working from time to time together. And with his introduction I first approached the *Manchester Guardian* to which I have several times contributed since the war.

Miss Lambert's associations were not confined to the Left. We sometimes had lunch with the most passionate spokesman of anti-Russian suspicions at that time, Mr. F. W. Voigt, editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, a man of deep intellect and deep bias who very much intrigued me. He struck me as Kingsley Martin's opposite: by conviction a passionate British nationalist, and by character Continental, even Teutonic.

HUNGARIANS in war-time Britain had their own public life which hardly penetrated either to the British or to the Hungarian public. There were various "Free Hungarian Movements", now competing and quarrelling, now uniting in a Front, and then splitting again. I made a solemn pledge not to be involved, a pledge which I myself did not take seriously. It could not be helped. Emigré politics may more often than not be a waste of time, but to shirk one's responsibility in them may amount to treason.

* My grandfather, Leo Veigelsberg, who died in 1908, was editor and leader writer of *Pester Lloyd*.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The most outstanding personality among the Free Hungarians was Count Michael Károlyi, President of the short-lived Hungarian Republic of 1918. He had arrived in England with his wife on the eve of the war, and they went to live in a modest room in Oxford.

I first saw him there, at the time of the Phoney War, when I was spending a few days with the writer, Baron Lajos Hatvany, who had also crossed the Channel on the eve of the war and withdrawn to a boarding house in Wellington Square. On a sunny morning he was shouting, in his usual bantering way, through the window of his ground floor sitting-room: "This is how I have to see my President!" Károlyi was just pushing a barrow loaded with suitcases and odd little pieces of furniture. He was moving from his room to another room. He was already in his sixties and impeded in his walk by a limp, the result of a cycling accident years before. Yet he performed the job in a cheerful spirit. His hat had slipped to his neck in the heat of toil, but his eyes were glittering with self-satisfaction through his spectacles. "That's an excellent barrow," he shouted back, "a real treasure."

Before his exile, he had possessed other treasures. He used to be the second richest landlord in Hungary. His wife was also wealthy: she was the niece and foster daughter of the younger Count Jules Andrássy, and the granddaughter of Count Jules Andrássy who was Hungarian Prime Minister after the Compromise of 1867, later Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and, as such, an associate of Bismarck.

Károlyi was a baldish tall man with expressive features which might equally have been taken as aristocratic or Jewish; he liked to tell stories about occasions when he had been mistaken for a Jew. His wife, much younger than he, had a figure of fair proportions with a noble presence and vivid face, dominated by large green eyes. They were an extremely elegant couple but now they were living in penury, and the first thing which impressed me was the way they accepted it. I never knew the details of their financial position. I could not tell whether some of their privations owed their origin to some strange intention of theirs. The Countess, in particular, felt tempted towards Puritan discipline. She always refused to travel by taxi, and I never knew whether to take this as a gesture against spendthrift *bourgeois* manners or indignation because she had no car of her own. At that time she made a rule to spend no more than (I think) 10 d a day, per person, on food. Even if they could have afforded more, they were certainly badly off and took it graciously. Their complaints were exclusively political, so were most of their interests. Madam Károlyi was in love with British institutions. Once I was given two tickets to a meeting of the Oxford Union, and asked the Count's permission to invite her. "Very kind of you," he answered, "but really . . ." and he held out 1*s.* 2*d.* "Buy her a tin of sardines and tell her it was you who bought it. She loves them. . . ."

One of the Free Hungarian movements, which generally included the old anti-Horthy refugees, was represented by the Károlyis. Another, originally associated with the pro-British wing of the Hungarian Legation, had unofficial backing from the Foreign Office. In my heart I was with the Károlyis, but I saw that they would not be able to achieve anything alone. I thought they ought to combine with the other important Free Hungarian movement. The very idea made the Count angry.

Again and again, he repeated that everyone associated with the Horthy régime was a political whore. Each time I answered that everyone who had lived in Hungary during those years had to some extent been associated with the Horthy régime. It could not have been otherwise. "Believe me," I said, "no one opposed that régime more bitterly than I. But I made use of the tolerance or vanity of its rulers. Without that, I could not have managed even the journalism of opposition. Was I a political whore?"

"I suppose you were," the Countess intervened. She was a fascinating person. At that period she hated me thoroughly, and made no attempt to conceal it. A man from Left-Wing literary circles in Hungary, unwilling to give her husband unqualified support—this was blasphemy. When the British declaration of war against Hungary was approaching, she told some of my friends quite openly that she expected Paul Ignotus would be interned as an enemy alien.

A day or two after that declaration of war I happened to enter Miss Lambert's room when she was discussing a subject with Countess Károlyi who had also come to see her. European Intelligence had been bombed out of its first offices and was then housed in Bedford College, Regent's Park. The Countess glared at me. "You—here?" "I am sorry to disappoint you," I said. Fortunately she was used to meeting people she disliked; they were too many to be ignored. After her talk with Miss Lambert she allowed me to see her out to the gates. It was a mild winter afternoon, the sun shimmering on

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fallen dry leaves and the melting snow. We walked for about an hour and forgot about Free Hungary. We spoke of our grandfathers and fathers who had worked together, and about mutual friends, the family doctors of the Andrássys and their clever children. In spite of very different social backgrounds, we had many common family recollections. We discussed English novels and Hungarian poets. Many a year has passed, including times when we have certainly not seen eye to eye; but I believe that since that day I have had the privilege of feeling myself her friend.

I BEGAN to know the British at the moment of their great danger.

"It was magnificent," Mr. Eden reported in a broadcast about what he had seen at Dunkirk. My British Left-Wing friends were grimly humorous about his enthusiasm. Even Mr. Churchill thought it right to suggest some reserve about the triumphant mood with which the returning troops were greeted; it was not by evacuations, he emphasised, that wars were won. Military experts can decide how far it was magnificent on the French shores. What I witnessed in the British capital certainly struck me as magnificent.

Magnificence is not necessarily perfection. "The English," Napoleon said, "owe their ultimate triumph over me merely to their stupidity. They did not notice that I had beaten them." He may have been right; apart from his failure to see what great wisdom this kind of stupidity contained. After the collapse of France, this became obvious. The cartoonist, Low, who invented Colonel Blimp, did not mind accepting the sort of single-track rhetoric which any Colonel Blimp would indulge in his patriotic fervour. His cartoon in the *Evening Standard*, luckily devoid of humour at the moment, showed a British Tommy in ragged trousers and with bulging chest. "Well, then alone. . . ." was the caption. I listened carefully to the talk in the tube trains. "Finished, you know," one Londoner said to another, gloomily looking up from his paper. "In France, of course," the other nodded, no less unhappily. That it was still going in Britain could not be questioned. It was, at that moment, determination to death. It was the sole thing common sense could suggest.

Common sense is a very misleading word, meaning often the most uncommon of virtues. Surely the British own it to quite a rare extent. But I would not deny that the way in which it rules them is not always reassuring. Unimaginativeness doubtless contributes to it. In people of rare political insight—like Low, for instance—common sense and uncommon awareness may work in harmony. Whether the same could be expected from the average of any nation, I cannot tell. There were aspects of British behaviour in those days which worried and irritated me. Others amused me. Most of them made me admire and love the British.

The wholesale internment of Germans as "enemy aliens" at the time of the Fifth Column scare was idiotic. To take precautions was of course necessary. But to lock up on these grounds such fighters against Nazism as Rudolf Olden* was obviously a service to Hitler, apart from being unkind.

Ignorance of the issues involved, and courtesy towards the enemy, were the oddest features of the moment. The interned Germans were huddled together in their makeshift barracks, Jews and political refugees, wretched and exhausted, with their worn-out nerves, terrified all the time about the prospects of invasion, haunted by fear of the Gestapo, and anxious about British plans concerning them. In came the Intelligence Officer one day, fresh and smart, greeting them politely. They asked him nervously whether there was any news. "O," he answered genially, "bad news for us, good news for you." What? the refugees inquired. "Paris has fallen." It really surprised him to see that his information was not received with relief.

The state of mind of the refugees in this country differed immensely at that time from the British outlook. Their knowledge of what was going on, and capacity to imagine what could be expected, were beyond average British range. But their nerves were wrecked. Their main problem was how to get overseas. The conversations I overheard in foreign languages or in foreign accents were more often than not on such topics as "If you want a visa to Venezuela. . . ."

The British, as far as I could see, simply failed to notice this. Some of my refugee friends bombarded me with questions about "what the English said at the B.B.C." I answered that in our Department we were talking shop, busy establishing the Monitoring Service, discussing the prospect of having more hours on the air, and the like. "But what do the rest say? Please do me this favour, tell me the first spontaneous

* The story is related in detail in the Memoirs of Michael Karolyi, *Faith Without Illusion* (Jonathan Cape).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sentence you hear from an English person at Broadcasting House tomorrow." I promised and then truthfully reported. It was a morning of catastrophic news and bright sunshine. The first words I heard from a British lady at Broadcasting House were "What a lovely day!"

She is unlikely to have been a genius. But she knew the essential thing, which the more experienced and imaginative foreigners did not know—that there was *no alternative.*

It was this attitude which impressed me even more in the Blitz. People are willing to forget what an ordeal it was; I have hardly heard any reference to it since the end of 1956, when I again arrived as a refugee in Britain. We know today that the Blitz was Goering's hysterical gesture to avenge his defeat in the Battle of Britain and that it was ultimately, from a strategic point of view, a failure. But who could have known this at the time? For the people of London it meant damp shelters, improvised bunks in poorly ventilated tube stations, without sanitation at first. It meant rushing home at dusk, and finding difficulty in reaching one's place of work as one quarter and another were closed to traffic.

Today the English are willing to belittle this. "We took it—but didn't others take it as well?" I think the answer is that nobody else took it in such circumstances. Many accepted the terror because they knew they would be shot if they opened their mouths to suggest they should do otherwise. Many took it after the great victories of their armies. This was not the case in the 1940 Blitz. The indiscriminate bombing of British cities came at a time when the population had no tangible proof of the ability of its own Forces to hit back. The Battle of Britain had been a victory, but expressed in abstract figures. The only realities had been the humming of enemy planes, the explosions and shakes and the destroyed homes visible after restless nights. I was worried that people less interested in political issues than I was, might say "We have had enough of it."

A woman friend of mine, employed by Mass Observation, sometimes spent a night in the shelters in slum districts. I asked anxiously what people had been saying. "It was awful," she sighed. "They are at the end of their tether." I was terrified to hear the rest. "But, what were their actual words?" I asked. "They said God couldn't tolerate that. It was *too* wicked." I asked whether no one wanted to make peace with the Germans. She was English enough to be quite astonished. "Peace, *now?* After all this? Of course not."

I USED to visit Hyde Park. The open air speakers had always interested me; they struck me as an admirable British peculiarity, and it was a long time before I grew tired of watching them. Of course they are not representative of British opinion; any small sect can have its platform there, but probably not the Church of England; and all extreme political movements, but seldom Conservatives, Labour or Liberal. But it was a revealing experience to attend these meetings. I saw how every sort of willingness to give in to the Germans disappeared as the bombing harassed the population. But sense of humour remained, and a feeling of kindness. I remember a speaker—I think, exceptionally, a Government speaker—explaining to the crowd that if they happened to catch a German airman after crash-landing or parachuting, they must not offer him tea until the authorities took charge of him. An old working woman protested strongly: "That's inhuman. My son is in the R.A.F. and I know how *he* would suffer if he weren't given a cup of tea if ever the Jerries brought him down." On this she was adamant. Some in the crowd took her side, and even those contradicting her were kind and laughed a lot.

My happiest surprise was to discover how the feeling against refugees and a suspicion towards anyone whose mother tongue was not English, gradually diminished in those months. The blindness of putting together all "enemy aliens" in one crowd was being cured at the very time when people had to suffer most from enemy attack.

Four years later, when the V 1's and the V 2's were dropping over London, these British virtues struck me as less conspicuous. No doubt these were also taken courageously and soberly, and with an indispensable sense of humour. Jokes about the "doodlebugs" were circulating; and the Government order to ignore V 2's in any expression which might reach the enemy (who was by then unable to carry out ordinary reconnaissance) was observed with perfect discipline. But it was no longer the elevating spirit of the Blitz. It followed D-day, and came as an anticlimax when victory had already been in sight. On the other hand, I found most of the refugees much calmer and braver than four years before. Partly because they no longer feared the greatest blow, Invasion; and partly because in the course of years they had to some extent become Anglicised.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

British and non-British had become like one another during the war and rejoiced together round the bonfires when V-day at last arrived.

IN THE middle of the war—after the Russians had become allies but before their successes made people worry about their glory—I was asked by the Ministry of Information to undertake a lecture tour in Cumberland and to talk about Hungary and the Balkans. I was glad to agree as both the subjects and the journey interested me. But I started the journey with terrible stage-fright. Was it not bound to be a flop? Even in London, where people were used to foreigners of all kinds, my accent struck everybody as strange. How much more might I fear the response of farmers in the furthest North-West of England? But my friends at the Ministry were reassuring and I did not want to fail them.

In Cumberland, a young worker received me and showed me round; he was Information Secretary for the district. He was glad to learn I was a Labour supporter like himself, and advised me to be "cautious". He had difficulties in his factory through urging his fellows to join the Union. I was astonished: was this possible at the time of a National Government with a Labour Deputy Prime Minister? How could a management dare in such times to object to Trade Unionism? I asked my friend. "O no, the management does not mind," he replied. "It's the workers who object."

He warned me not to talk Labour too crudely when meeting the lady to whom he felt he should introduce me; she was, he added, apart from her views, a very nice person, the President of the local Conservative Women's Association. I entered a pleasant and stately country house, and we stayed there for dinner. We could not have shocked the hostess and her family with our party allegiance even if we had wanted to. Her younger daughter, a smart lady married in London but just then at home for a holiday, turned out to be almost Communist and not even that seemed to shock her Conservative family. My Red friend, however, was a little shocked by her. "Do people like this woman think," he murmured as we left, "that they'll carry on ruling the country under a red flag?"

I was less lucky with the regional Lady Patroness of the Liberals. I happened to express a flippant lack of sympathy with Prohibition, and got a quick rebuke. I did not know she was the great national figure of British temperance. Her son, a member of Parliament, could only drink beer in secret. But even he agreed with his mother on principle. In that district, my worker friend explained, it *was* a matter of principle; teetotallers had voted Liberal, and publicans and their friends Conservative, for generations. Labour was almost non-existent. The bulk of the population were farmers who did not feel strongly against Labour but did not care for Labour. They cared, however, for Russia. The enthusiasm for the Soviet Allies was even higher in Cumberland than in London. I remember talking to a miner's widow who ran a teashop and showed a very lively interest in public affairs. "The party I should like to join if there was one, is Christian Communists," she said. To some extent this was *vox populi*.

My friend thought it right to warn me also before some lectures. "Tomorrow you are going to talk to children in a Quaker School," he said. "Don't talk too much war to them, they don't like that." War propaganda for pacifists was a special problem. But I muddled through.

Altogether my contacts with the audience moved me. I do not claim that the response was a frenzy of enthusiasm but I found my listeners, whether farmers, artisans or school children, very attentive and full of good will. "What could we do after the war to help those peoples in the Balkans?" was the question most frequently asked from me. I blush to add that I was also greeted as a war hero for the simple reason that I had come from London and had a time-bomb near my flat on the eve of my departure for the lecture tour. That Cumberland district had never had an air raid.

My worries about language proved to be unfounded. I understood the Cumberland (or, for that matter, the Yorkshire) accent much more easily than Cockney. To call a bus a "booss" was only too natural for my East European ears. Nor did my accent very much astonish them. On the contrary. They were used to hearing an English different from their own when addressed by people arriving from London. Whether it was King's English, or Poplar English, or my Magyar English, did not make a tremendous difference. "Which part of Britain do you come from, sir?" a farmer asked me before he had been told about my nationality. No such question had ever been put to me in London. At last I felt quite at home in the British Isles.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jack Kerouac

Beatific

On the Origins of a Generation

THIS necessarily'll have to be about myself. I'm going all out.

That nutty picture of me on the cover of *On the Road* results from the fact that I had just gotten down from a high mountain where I'd been for two months completely alone and usually I was in the habit of combing my hair of course because you have to get rides on the highway and all that and you usually want girls to look at you as though you were a man and not a wild beast but my poet friend Gregory Corso opened his shirt and took out a silver crucifix that was hanging from a chain and said "Wear this and wear it outside your shirt and don't comb your hair!" so I spent several days around San Francisco going around with him and others like that, to parties, arties, parts, jam sessions, bars, poetry readings, churches, walking talking poetry in the streets, walking talking God in the streets (and at one point a strange gang of hoodlums got mad and said "What right does he got to wear that?" and my own gang of musicians and poets told them to cool it) and finally on the third day *Mademoiselle* magazine wanted to take pictures of us all so I posed just like that, wild hair, crucifix, and all, with Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg and Phil Whalen, and the only publication which later did not erase the crucifix from my breast (from that plaid sleeveless cotton shirt-front) was *The New York Times*, therefore *The New York Times* is as beat as I am, and I'm glad I've got a friend. I mean it sincerely, God bless *The New York Times* for not erasing the crucifix from my picture as though it was something distasteful. As a matter of fact, who's *really* beat around here, I mean if you wanta talk of Beat as "beat down" the people who erased the crucifix are really the "beat down" ones and not *The New York Times*, myself, and Gregory Corso the poet. I am not ashamed to wear the crucifix of my Lord. It is because I am Beat, that is, I believe in beatitude and that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to it. I am sure no priest would've condemned me for wearing the crucifix outside my shirt everywhere and *no matter where* I went, even to have my picture taken by *Mademoiselle*. So you people don't believe in God. So you're all big smart know-it-all Marxists and Freudians, hey? Why don't you come back in a million years and tell me all about it, angels?

Recently Ben Hecht said to me on TV "Why are you afraid to speak out your mind, what's wrong with this country, what is everybody afraid of?" Was he talking to me? And all he wanted me to do was speak out my mind *against* people, he sneeringly brought up Dulles, Eisenhower, the Pope, all kinds of people like that habitually he would sneer at with Drew Pearson, *against* the world he wanted, this is his idea of freedom, he calls it freedom. Who knows, my God, but that the universe is not one vast sea of compassion actually, the veritable holy honey, beneath all this show of personality and cruelty. In fact who knows but that it isn't the solitude

IN our June number we published Caroline Freud's study of "The Beatnik". Mr. Jack Kerouac, whose well-known novel "On the Road" was originally entitled "Beat Generation," has offered another view in a lecture before university students in New York, attempting to teach them how to conjugate properly "beat ... beaten ... beatific. ..."

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the oneness of the essence of everything, the solitude of the actual oneness of the unbornness of the unborn essence of everything, nay the true pure foreverhood, that big blank potential that can ray forth anything it wants from its pure store, that blazing bliss, *Mattivajrakaruna* the Transcendental Diamond Compassion! No, I want to speak *for* things, for the crucifix I speak out, for the Star of Israel I speak out, for the divinest man who ever lived who was a German (Bach) I speak out, for sweet Mohammed I speak out, for Buddha I speak out, for Lao-tse and Chuang-tse I speak out, for D. T. Suzuki I speak out . . . why should I attack what I love out of life. This is Beat. Live your lives out? Naw, *love* your lives out. When they come and stone you at least you won't have a glass house, just your glassy flesh.

THAT wild eager picture of me on the cover of *On the Road* where I look so Beat goes back much further than 1948 when John Clellon Holmes (author of *Go* and *The Horn)* and I were sitting around trying to think up the meaning of the Lost Generation and the subsequent Existentialism and I said "You know, this is really a beat generation" and he leapt up and said "That's it, that's right!" It goes back to the 1880's when my grandfather Jean-Baptiste Kerouac used to go out on the porch in big thunderstorms and swing his kerosene lamp at the lightning and yell "Go ahead, go, if you're more powerful than I am strike me and put the light out!" while the mother and the children cowered in the kitchen. And the light never went out. Maybe since I'm supposed to be the spokesman of the Beat Generation (I *am* the originator of the term, and around it the term and the generation have taken shape) it should be pointed out that all this "Beat" guts therefore goes back to my ancestors who were Bretons who were the most independent group of nobles in all old Europe and kept fighting Latin France to the last wall (although a big blond bosun on a merchant ship snorted when I told him my ancestors were Bretons in Cornwall, Brittany, "Why, we Wikings used to swoop down and steal your nets!"). Breton, Wiking, Irishman, Indian, madboy, it doesn't make any difference, there is no doubt about the Beat Generation, at least the core of it, being a swinging group of new American men intent on joy. . . . Irresponsibility? Who wouldn't help a dying man on an empty road? No and the Beat Generation goes back to the wild parties my father used to have at home in the 1920's and 1930's in New England that were so fantastically loud nobody could sleep for blocks around and when the cops came they always had a drink. It goes back to the wild and raving childhood of playing the Shadow under windswept trees of New England's gleeful autumn, and the howl of the Moon Man on the sandbank until we caught him in a tree (he was an "older" guy of 15), the maniacal laugh of certain neighbourhood madboys, the furious humour of whole gangs playing basketball till long after dark in the park, it goes back to those crazy days before World War II when teenagers drank beer on Friday nights at Lake ballrooms and worked off their hangovers playing baseball on Saturday afternoon followed by a dive in the brook — and our fathers wore straw hats like W. C. Fields. It goes back to the completely senseless babble of the Three Stooges, the ravings of the Marx Brothers (the tenderness of Angel Harpo at harp, too).

It goes back to the inky ditties of old cartoons (Krazy Kat with the irrational brick) — to Laurel and Hardy in the Foreign Legion — to Count Dracula and his *smile* to Count Dracula shivering and hissing back before the Cross — to the Golem horrifying the persecutors of the Ghetto — to the quiet sage in a movie about India, unconcerned about the plot — to the giggling old Tao Chinaman trotting down the sidewalk of old Clark Gable Shanghai — to the holy old Arab warning the hotbloods that Ramadan is near. To the Werewolf of London a distinguished doctor in his velour smoking jacket smoking his pipe over a lamplit tome on botany and suddenly hairs grown on his hands, his cat hisses, and he slips out into the night with a cape and a slanty cap like the caps of people in breadlines — to Lamont Cranston so cool and sure suddenly becoming the frantic Shadow going mwee hee hee ha ha in the alleys of New York imagination. To Popeye the sailor and the Sea Hag and the meaty gunwales of boats, to Cap'n Easy and Wash Tubbs screaming with ecstasy over canned peaches on a cannibal isle, to Wimpy looking X-eyed for a juicy hamburger such as they make no more. To Jiggs ducking before a household of furniture flying through the air, to Jiggs and the boys at the bar and the corned beef and cabbage of old woodfence noons — to King Kong his eyes looking into the hotel window with tender huge love for Fay Wray — nay, to Bruce Cabot in mate's cap leaning over the rail of a fogbound ship saying "Come aboard." It goes back to when grapefruits were thrown at crooners and harvestwork-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers at bar-rails slapped burlesque queens on the rump. To when fathers took their sons to the Twi League game. To the days of Babe Callahan on the waterfront, Dick Barthelmess camping under a London streetlamp. To dear old Basil Rathbone looking for the Hound of the Baskervilles (a dog big as the Gray Wolf who will destroy Odin) — to dear old bleary Doctor Watson with a brandy in his hand. To Joan Crawford her raw shanks in the fog, in striped blouse smoking a cigarette at sticky lips in the door of the waterfront dive. To train whistles of steam engines out above the moony pines. To Maw and Paw in the Model A clanking on to get a job in California selling used cars making a whole lotta money. To the glee of America, the honesty of America, the honesty of oldtime grafters in straw hats as well as the honesty of oldtime waiters in line at the Brooklyn Bridge in *Winterset*, the funny spitelessness of old bigfisted America like Big Boy Williams saying "Hoo? Hee? Huh?" in a movie about Mack Trucks and slidingdoor lunchcarts. To Clark Gable, his certain smile, his confident leer. Like my grandfather this America was invested with wild selfbelieving individuality and this had begun to disappear around the end of World War II with so many great guys dead (I can think of half a dozen from my own boyhood groups) when suddenly it began to emerge again, the hipsters began to appear gliding around saying "Crazy, man."

When I first saw the hipsters creeping around Times Square in 1944 I didn't like them either. One of them, Huncke of Chicago, came up to me and said "Man, I'm beat." I knew right away what he meant somehow. At that time I still didn't like bop which was then being introduced by Bird Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and Bags Jackson (on vibes), the last of the great swing musicians was Don Byas who went to Spain right after, but then I began . . . but earlier I'd dug all my jazz in the old Minton Playhouse (Lester Young, Ben Webster, Joey Guy, Charlie Christian, others) and when I first heard Bird and Diz in the Three Deuces I knew they were serious musicians playing a goofy new sound and didn't care what I thought, or what my friend Seymour thought. In fact I was leaning against the bar with a beer when Dizzy came over for a glass of water from the bartender, put himself right against me and reached both arms around both sides of my head to get the glass and danced away, as though knowing I'd be singing about him someday, or that one of his arrangements would be named after me someday by some goofy circumstance. Charlie Parker was spoken of in Harlem as the greatest new musician since Chu Berry and Louis Armstrong.

Anyway, the hipsters, whose music was bop, they looked like criminals but they kept talking about the same things I liked, long outlines of personal experience and vision, nightlong confessions full of hope that had become illicit and repressed by War, stirrings, rumblings of a new soul (that same old human soul). And so Huncke appeared to us and said "I'm beat" with radiant light shining out of his despairing eyes . . . a word perhaps brought from some midwest carnival or junk cafeteria. It was a new language, actually spade (Negro) jargon but you soon learned it, like "hung up" couldn't be a more economical term to mean so many things. Some of these hipsters were raving mad and talked continually. It was jazzy. Symphony Sid's allnight modern jazz and bop show was always on. By 1948 it began to take shape. That was a wild vibrating year when a group of us would walk down the street and yell hello and even stop and talk to anybody that gave us a friendly look. The hipsters had eyes. That was the year I saw Montgomery Clift, unshaven, wearing a sloppy jacket, slouching down Madison Avenue with a companion. It was the year I saw Charley Bird Parker strolling down Eighth Avenue in a black turtleneck sweater with Babs Gonzales and a beautiful girl.

By 1948 the hipsters, or beatsters, were divided into cool and hot. Much of the misunderstanding about hipsters and the Beat Generation in general today derives from the fact that there are two distinct styles of hipsterism: the "cool" today is your bearded laconic sage, or schlerm, before a hardly touched beer in a beatnik dive, whose speech is low and unfriendly, whose girls say nothing and wear black: the "hot" today is the crazy talkative shining eyed (often innocent and openhearted) nut who runs from bar to bar, pad to pad looking for everybody, shouting, restless, lushy, trying to "make it" with the subterranean beatniks who ignore him. Most Beat Generation artists belong to the hot school, naturally since that hard gemlike flame needs a little heat. In many cases the mixture is 50-50. It was a hot hipster like myself who finally cooled it in Buddhist meditation, though when I go in a jazz joint I still feel like yelling "Blow baby blow!"

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the musicians though nowadays I'd get 86'd for this. In 1948 the "hot hipsters" were racing around in cars like in *On the Road* looking for wild bawling jazz like Willis Jackson or Lucky Thompson (the early) or Chubby Jackson's big band while the "cool hipsters" cooled it in dead silence before formal and excellent musical groups like Lennie Tristano or Miles Davis. It's still just about the same, except that it has begun to grow into a national generation and the name "Beat" has stuck (though all hipsters hate the word).

The word "beat" originally meant poor, down and out, deadbeat, on the bum, sad, sleeping in subways. Now that the word is belonging officially it is being made to stretch to include people who do not sleep in subways but have a certain new gesture, or attitude, which I can only describe as a new *more*. "Beat Generation" has simply become the slogan or label for a revolution in manners in America. Marlon Brando was not really first to portray it on the screen. Dane Clark with his pinched Dostoievskyan face and Brooklyn accent, and of course Garfield, were first. The private eyes were Beat, if you will recall. Bogart. Lorre was Beat. In *M*, Peter Lorre started a whole revival, I mean the slouchy street walk.

I WROTE *On the Road* in three weeks in the beautiful month of May 1941 while living in the Chelsea district of lower West Side Manhattan, on a 100-foot roll and put the Beat Generation in words in there, saying at the point where I am taking part in a wild kind of collegiate party with a bunch of kids in an abandoned miner's shack "These kids are great but where are Dean Moriarty and Carlo Marx? Oh well I guess they wouldn't belong in this gang, they're too *dark*, too strange, too subterranean and I am slowly beginning to join a new kind of *beat* generation." The manuscript of *Road* was turned down on the grounds that it would displease the sales manager of my publisher at that time, though the editor, a very intelligent man, said "Jack this is just like Dostoievsky, but what can I do at this time?" It was too early. So for the next six years I was a bum, a brakeman, a seaman, a panhandler, a pseudo-Indian in Mexico, anything and everything, and went on writing because my hero was Goethe and I believed in art and hoped some day to write the third part of *Faust*, which I have done in *Doctor Sax*. Then in 1952 an article was published in *The New York Times* Sunday magazine saying, the headline, " 'This is a Beat Generation' " (in quotes like that) and in the article it said that I had come up with the term first "when the face was harder to recognise," the face of the generation. After that there was some talk of the Beat Generation but in 1955 I published an excerpt from *Road* (melling it with parts of *Visions of Neal*) under the pseudonym "Jean-Louis," it was entitled *Jazz of the Beat Generation* and was copyrighted as being an excerpt from a novel-in-progress entitled *Beat Generation* (which I later changed to *On the Road* at the insistence of my new editor) and so then the term moved a little faster. The term and the cats. Everywhere began to appear strange hepcats and even college kids went around hep and cool and using the terms I'd heard on Times Square in the early Forties, it was growing somehow. But when the publishers finally took a dare and published *On the Road* in 1957 it burst open, it mushroomed, everybody began yelling about a Beat Generation. I was being interviewed everywhere I went for "what I meant" by such a thing. People began to call themselves beatniks, beats, jazzniks, bopniks, bugniks and finally I was called the "avatar" of all this.

Yet it was as a Catholic, it was not at the insistence of any of these "niks" and certainly not with their approval either, that I went one afternoon to the church of my childhood (one of them), Ste. Jeanne d'Arc in Lowell, Mass., and suddenly with tears in my eyes and had a vision of what I must have really meant with "Beat" anyhow when I heard the holy silence in the church (I was the only one in there, it was five P.M., dogs were barking outside, children yelling, the fall leaves, the candles were flickering alone just for me), the vision of the word Beat as being to mean beatific.... There's the priest preaching on Sunday morning, all of a sudden through a side door of the church comes a group of Beat Generation characters in strapped raincoats like the I.R.A. coming in silently to "dig" the religion... I knew it then.

BUT this was 1954, so then what horror I felt in 1957 and later 1958 naturally to suddenly see "Beat" being taken up by everybody, press and TV and Hollywood borscht circuit to include the "juvenile delinquency" shot and the horrors of a mad teeming billyclub New York and L.A. and they began to call *that* Beat, *that* beatific.... Bunch of fools marching against the San Francisco Giants protesting baseball, as if (now) in my name and I, my child-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hood ambition to be a big league baseball star hitter like Ted Williams so that when Bobby Thomson hit that homerun in 1951 I trembled with joy and couldn't get over it for days and wrote poems about how it is possible for the human spirit to win after all! Or, when a murder, a routine murder took place in North Beach, they labelled it a Beat Generation slaying although in my childhood I'd been famous as an eccentric in my block for stopping the younger kids from throwing rocks at the squirrels, for stopping them from frying snakes in cans or trying to blow up frogs with straws. Because my brother had died at the age of nine, his name was Gerard Kerouac, and he'd told me "Ti Jean never hurt any living being, all living beings whether it's just a little cat or squirrel or whatever, all, are going to heaven straight into God's snowy arms so never hurt anything and if you see anybody hurt anything stop them as best you can" and when he died a file of gloomy nuns in black from St. Louis de France parish had filed (1926) to his deathbed to hear his last words about Heaven. And my father too, Leo, had never lifted a hand to punish me, or to punish the little pets in our house, and this teaching was delivered to me by the men in my house and I have never had anything to do with violence, hatred, cruelty, and all that horrible nonsense which, nevertheless, because God is gracious beyond all human imagining, he will forgive in the long end ... that million years I'm asking about you, America.

And so now they have beatnik routines on TV, starting with satires about girls in black and fellows in jeans with snapknives and sweatshirts and swastikas tattooed under their armpits, it will come to respectable m.c.s of spectaculars coming out nattily attired in Brooks Brothers jean-type tailoring and sweater-type pull-ons, in other words, it's a simple change in fashion and manners, just a history crust — like from the Age of Reason, from old Voltaire in a chair to romantic Chatterton in the moonlight — from Teddy Roosevelt to Scott Fitzgerald ... So there's nothing to get excited about. Beat comes out, actually, of old American whoopee and it will only change a few dresses and pants and make chairs useless in the livingroom and pretty soon we'll have Beat Secretaries of State and there will be instituted new tinsels, in fact new reasons for malice and new reasons for virtue and new reasons for forgiveness....

But yet, but yet, woe, woe unto those who think that the Beat Generation means crime, delinquency, immorality, amorality ... woe unto those who attack it on the grounds that they simply don't understand history and the yearnings of human souls ... woe unto those who don't realise that America must, will, is, changing now, for the better I say. Woe unto those who believe in the atom bomb, who believe in hating mothers and fathers, who deny the most important of the Ten Commandments, woe unto those (though) who don't believe in the unbelievable sweetness of sex love, woe unto those who are the standard bearers of death, woe unto those who believe in conflict and horror and violence and fill our books and screens and livingrooms with all that crap, woe in fact unto those who make evil movies about the Beat Generation where innocent housewives are raped by beatniks! Woe unto those who are the real dreary sinners that even God finds room to forgive....

Woe unto those who spit on the Beat Generation, the wind'll blow it back.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES & TOPICS

Ping-pong

THE years roll on, the grass grows, the historians do their best to tell what happened, and finally the film industry tries to explain—in terms that its massive audience can understand—what the tragedy was all about. Two films have recently been shown in London which deal directly with two aspects of the Nazi horror, though from utterly different points of view. Both are based on famous works of art, *The Devil's General* being a fairly close transference to the screen of Carl Zuckmayer's play, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, following the diary itself, more or less. But there the resemblance ceases. *The Devil's General* is a German film, *The Diary* is American. The one deals with the Nazi monstrosity as seen from the centre: it is the story, based on the life of Udet, of the professional air force general who sells his soul to the criminal government in exchange for power, glory, and the opportunity of carrying out his life's work in apparently favourable circumstances. This act of self-betrayal leads directly to his ultimate suicide. The other is the story of a small group of Jews, in hiding, eventually led away to be murdered, and is seen through the eyes of a very young girl, the epitome of innocence.

Both films are made with considerable technical expertise, but the purpose of this comment is not to discuss their artistic merit; rather is it to examine some of the suppositions that lie behind such film-making. In the first place, what is it that the makers of these films regard as so loathsome about the Nazi régime, wherein precisely does the villainy of the villains lie? The emphasis in the film of *The Devil's General* differs subtly from that of the play. In the play, Harras-Udet is an immoralist; in the film, a charming scoundrel with a golden heart. In the play, we know that he is damned; in the film, we feel that he is a hero misled who, though he denies it, might yet be saved, Faust-like. Had he not sacrificed his honour to his ambitions, he would have been a modern Galahad, or at least a Lancelot. In fact, the moral of this film is that the essence of the Nazi horror lay in the destruction of the concept of honour in basically honourable men. For the metaphysician, this may be perhaps true (if there are any metaphysicians left). Pragmatists remain more impressed by Auschwitz.

And what of the American film? Here a very different lesson is pointed. The tragedy is the destruction of youth, and this is exemplified in the frustrated love-affair of Anne and the boy, Peter. We even have a sort of grotesque parody of the Hollywood happy ending, with boy and girl embracing in the last reel, just before they are taken off to be murdered. We are also told that better times are coming, and that people are fundamentally decent. In fact, the film formula is applied in all its boring banality to a subject where it is completely out of place. Youth, sex (or love, if you prefer it), and a golden future are seen as the highest desiderata. If the Nazis were evil, it therefore follows that their evilness can best be shown as a denial of those supreme ends. Such film-idiots would doubtless insert an embrace into the last reel of a *Life of Christ*, if they thought they could get away with it.

Can the films convey real and complex problems to their millions? They have done so in the past, if rarely. (Eisenstein is, of course, the name that comes to mind.) If they cannot, should they tackle such themes, should they in fact falsify reality so that the next generation will not know where the vileness really lay and may perhaps even come to believe that it was all grossly exaggerated? Honour and the sanctity of young love are two fine concepts; they have about as much to do with Nazism as has ping-pong to do with death.

Constantine FitzGibbon

Immoderate Criticism

ANGLO-AMERICAN amity is disrupted much less by our mutual snipings and sneerings, than when either of us prostrates himself before the other. If I say that the sound of American poetry today drowns out completely the English poets' twitterings, I hate the Americans for making me say it; if I could still condescend to them as honestly awkward and trying hard, I'd like them better. So I shudder to think of the Anglophobia that must rankle in the breast of Steven Marcus when he writes in painful sarcasm: "Pity the poor English! How can we expect those sad and exhausted empirical souls to withstand this engine of organised inanity?" This was in *Partisan Review* for last Fall, a memorably cruel review-article called "Obsessed Critics", where the "engine of organised inanity" was Hugh Kenner. I want to reassure Marcus, to tell him: "We withstand, we do

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

really. We have our own resources, impregnable complacencies you don't dream of. . . ." But Hugh Kenner has addressed the Royal Society of Literature; and how explain to Marcus that the echo which reaches him across the Atlantic isn't the sound of a bastion falling, but only of wheels still turning, as unaccountably as ever, inside the eccentric edifice of a British institution?

It's no good I'm afraid; Marcus will not be comforted. And after all, he's quite right. When he quotes one of Kenner's most intricately exact and powerful formulations (about the effect of some lines from the *Rockdrill* Cantos), and then "pities the poor English", he's right to suppose that the intricacy, the exactness, and the power are all more than we can cope with. For we really have our bastions, though the Royal Society of Literature isn't one of them; and they are not currently being stormed.

Which isn't, I hope, to compete with Marcus in the fouling of one's own nest, or (to put it more prettily) in an act of agonised and penitent appraisal. Kenner's brilliantly unbalanced *Gnomon* is only one of Marcus's whipping-boys; the others (which may be as bad as he says, for I haven't read them) are Maxwell Geismar's *American Moderns* and Harry Levin's *Power of Blackness*. He says of the three of them:

> They are all excessive and extravagant. Each suffers from an unbalancing commitment to a radically distorted and distorting point of view—from an obsession. And the very fact of such books expresses something about our society and culture. We are still ... a provincial and decentralised society, a society without a centre of cultural intelligence and sanity.

Such as the Royal Society of Literature, no doubt? But, no, Marcus can't get away with that: our famous moderation has more to do with inert complacencies of habit than with urbanity, centrality, sanity.

All the same, it's real enough. And if it looks more valuable from the outside than from here, where we know how easily it comes, well, that's understandable too. It probably *is* more valuable abroad than at home. And there's no doubt that, leaving aside a "sport" like Lionel Trilling, American criticism does look, from here, above all things *immoderate* — as Marcus says, "excessive and extravagant". Harold Rosenberg, for instance, who appears cheek by jowl with Marcus in the *Partisan Review*, doesn't from here look very different from Hugh Kenner. To be sure he is of the Left where Kenner is of the Right, he is unacademic where Kenner is academic (though Kenner's tone isn't), he is of the East where Kenner is of the West (though only accidentally). But the immoderation, the excess, the extravagance, the procedure by vast aphoristic generalisation, the armoured and mechanised style that always prefers power to grace — all these are the same. I don't know whether these are better critics than Trilling, I'm sure they're much better *for us*. Even Trilling, of course, really fits Marcus' rule—he's excessively moderate, excessively genteel, like many an Anglicised Anglophil before him. But that's precisely the excess that we are least armed against, and the sort that does us most harm. Rosenberg and Kenner, on the other hand, can give us a real jolt — which is why of course they aren't gathered to our national bosom, as Trilling is.

They both dislike us, or at least they deride our cultural pretensions. Kenner, calling Charles Tomlinson the best English poet now writing, says this is like calling someone the wittiest statistician in Terre Haute. And for Rosenberg American poetry went off the rails when it followed Eliot instead of Pound, the English model instead of the French one.

> To be a radical or fascist ideologist, an American must turn to the ideas of the Continent. To be respectable he need only learn to love Merrie Olde England.

And again,

> For American poetry, France meant experiment, risk, perception, conversion of the everyday; England means a poetry of comments that sound like poetry.

Not much of Rosenberg's criticism* is even remotely literary. As even this much is nowhere near being "practical", it won't to our die-hards seem properly "literary" at all. In fact it's very much, and appropriately, French-style criticism, which is good so long as it stays with the aphorism. Rosenberg falls down when he loses his nerve and begins to qualify. For instance, condemning American apprenticeship to English models, he suddenly remembers "the Elizabethans", and says that of course if the Americans had got as far back as that, they would have done all right. Kenner, arguing the same case, sees that the author of *Gerontion* and *Elizabethan Essays* got back to "that Shakespeherean rag" very quickly indeed; and plenty of gentlemen from Merrie Olde Tennessee and parts adjacent have followed him there with prompt facility. But neither this in Rosenberg nor the absence of any more particular judgments invalidates the chain of generalised aphorism which ties Baudelaire to Rimbaud to Rilke to

* *The Tradition of the New*. By HAROLD ROSENBERG. Horizon Press Inc. $4.95.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wallace Stevens. Simply, this is a different, non-empiricist way of thinking about poetry; and as for the "unbalancing commitment to ... an obsession", it's there right enough, but perhaps "obsession" is just another word for "working hypothesis". The trouble with us empiricists is that we have our hypotheses too, which may be our obsessions, but we can't formulate them, even to ourselves; which makes them all the more "distorted and distorting".

We never bore each other so much, British and Americans, as when we play the "generations" game. Whereas here the thirties, the forties, the fifties are almost universally the only critical categories for discussing contemporaries, in the States this seems to be peculiar to New York, if not to *Partisan Review*. Looking at the last section of Rosenberg's book, announced as "chapters on recent American intellectual history", and seeing names like Leslie Fiedler and Sidney Hook, familiar pawns of the generations game, my heart sank. But surprisingly, out of this domestic in-fighting come the best things of all, and the things most immediately applicable to our own case. Rosenberg plays the generations game only to show that it hasn't any rules, and that what it produces, in Fiedler and others, is "*position-taking* writing" and "not poetry, not fiction, not literary nor philosophical appreciation, not individual insights." Not drama, either. We remember the careful pattern of the generations in *The Entertainer*, and all that guff in *Look Back in Anger* about how there are no causes left to die for. And then there is *Declaration*, or those insulting and trivial speculations about provincial scholarship-holders who marry above their station. Sometimes it's true that the British experience differs instructively: when Rosenberg, attacking one okay name after another, moves from Dwight Macdonald to the sociologists, and says of David Riesman and William H. Whyte, "Evoking the sinister concept of man as a tool and as an object, the new writing does so in an oddly disembodied and unpainful way", we may reflect that our best-selling sociology (*The Uses of Literacy*) is all too embodied and painful, personal guilts and yearnings producing what is neither usefully clinical nor with the alternative persuasiveness of creative imagination.

We may as well agree with Marcus that neither American nor British society has "a centre of cultural intelligence and sanity". But what follows? Surely, that we shouldn't pretend to what we haven't got; that moderation and urbanity and common consent and the common reader are the worst shams of all; that since what we've got is a free-for-all, let's make it really free for *all*. The extravagant and extreme are our best security, for they will soonest cancel each other out. If obsessions is all we have, at least let's not teach them camouflage. In this way iconoclasm will tread on the heels of eulogy, and the balance right itself all the sooner. Rosenberg is a very good thing — especially for us. (And so is Kenner.)

Donald Davie

Ulysses in Nighttown

ULYSSES IN NIGHTTOWN, dramatised by Marjorie Barkentin, conceived and directed by Burgess Meredith, is the best thing London has seen since the theatre started gutting books. Why weren't the possibilities spotted before? It is true that Nighttown is the least readable part of the shocking grammarian's monstrosity, but this is largely because it was written in dramatic form, held up by a mass of stage directions, and dizzying in its invention. The real blame for the failure to see a play in it lies with academic literary criticism. Once an *avant garde* religion, *Ulysses* became an industry for exegesists in the universities. By now every detail of Bloom's Dublin day has been correlated with the Ulysses myth, every whiff of meaning has been caught. The cardinal fact that it is a comic drama imbued with the comic writer's overwhelming feeling for orgy and meaninglessness, has been more and more forgotten. The very tedium of *Ulysses* belongs to comic technique — slow narration, a minuteness which makes small things disproportionately and absurdly large, the breaking down of action into gesture. People become grotesques and giants when their minds and bodies are gone over with a toothcomb. More important (and more interesting, since we know Joyce's eager love of the theatre and opera) is the theatrical style. It is visual and oral, as theatre always is. The prose is dressed up, the people appear in changing masks and disguises (an old theatrical game), characters soliloquise, hold the floor and live in a continual state of quick change and dramatic surprise. *Ulysses* is theatre, through and through.

This is what Mr. Burgess Meredith and Miss Marjorie Barkentin have cleverly extracted. My only criticism of their success is that in following the fantasy of Nighttown, they have not allowed our eye to catch sight of what haunted Joyce in Trieste — the memory of some dirty brick wall or Dublin doorway. I suppose the dustbin, which is the first thing one sees when the curtain goes up, is meant to stand for this. But dustbins are portable. I missed the sight of a dirty city, rooted in poverty to the ground; it existed only in words. This is a minor point. For Joyce's Dublin is half-figment of *fin-de-siècle* romantic-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism, half-Post Office Directory; it is not the Dublin of Sean O'Casey. Mr. Meredith's production caught something indispensable to Joyce — the literary illusions of the period, taste at the point of vulgarity as it passes out.

This sensibility to what Joyce requires would have led to no more than an interesting dramatic experiment, if Mr. Meredith had not hit upon Zero Mostel to play Bloom. In Mostel a clown of genius entered the outsize and deplorable body of the middle-aged advertising agent and cuckold. Mostel gave us a creature of bloated delicacy, vulgar, sad, furtive, a body half full of wind, pigs' trotters and Guinness, yet sagging on tired city feet and dragging a soul about with him — no, not a soul, a pain. The voice had gone croaking softly into ruin, the mind was left with only the dignity of bewilderment. As a mime, Mostel was wonderful in invention. He had eyes, brows, cheeks, fingers, feet and even belly so quick to assume a passing thought, that he was the comic disaster itself. He was the very figure of plausibility past its peak. His gabbling was startling; and his handling of Joyce's telegraphese and pedantries was that of an astonished connoisseur fishing the half-remembered out of the dustbin of his own mind. Mostel was the clown of mood, half hope and half reluctance; he was never mannered; he entirely avoided the temptation to be fey or to be spiritual. His body was the common burden, the smarmed, balding hair was a protest in itself. He was as solid as Billy Bennett used to be, but bedevilled by memory and defeated love which were beyond Bennett's powers.

Bloom enacting his guilt-and-triumph-fantasies dominates the whole of the first act. It is more coherent than the second where one notices the difficulties of ballet-like movement on the small stage. Stephen dominates the second act, and Bloom, except when he is in the grip of the flagellating witch, steps apart to become the protective spectator. Stephen is a far less interesting character than Bloom, a guilty aesthete, a very trying poet of the period, revived by a grammarian's bitter and masochistic jokes. Alan Badel gave us this, but caught something else that Joyce really brings out too, if one can survive the poeticising: the nervous vitality, the conceit, the swagger of Stephen. He also caught the mixture of cynicism and obduracy in Stephen's guilt and the flashiness of Stephen's horror. (I must say that Stephen's mother crawling out of the grave after him was most unmoving; I took it as vulgar melodrama.) He looked lonely and (occasionally) as if, wildly, he did not care. That was good. Because, of course, he didn't. And at the final curtain when Bloom stepped forward to protect Stephen as he lay knocked out on the ground, one was satisfied that Bloom was protecting a real sad, silly youngster and not some Yeatsian abstraction like "the artist as a young man". With these two characters soundly established, Mr. Burgess Meredith has to fit in the phantasmagoria. A large cast had to flash in and out, vividly, with a wit of appearance and motion, and all the actors and actresses must be praised for their turns. Paddy Stone's Blazes Boylan; Robert Bernal's Lynch, talking out of the gutter of his nasty mind; the lady-like accusers played by Sally Travers, Jill Lelford and Pauline Flanagan; and again Pauline Flanagan's insidious Molly Bloom, oozing sexual contentment, were notable. But all were. The costumes in the second act were perfection in their slatternly, cheap luxury; I am uncertain about the coloured rags and tatters of the street scene in the first act. Here I thought I was back in literary Connemara, but perhaps that is a bookish comment. I am sure that Joyce's stream of self-consciousness, his sense of the mind as a stage, his sense of extent and lack of depth, found a quintessential expression in this play which, because of Zero Mostel, almost stands on its own feet without the book.

V. S. Pritchett

Adenauer, and the Others

FOR anyone who has been following German politics from the birth of the *Bundesrepublik* in 1949 to the present, it takes some considerable mental effort to think of Bonn with any other Chancellor but Konrad Adenauer. If this is a sign of anaemic imagination, then the anaemia is in Bonn's political life itself. Ten years of the Adenauer era have gone by, and they have produced so few surprises that the less use the imagination is put to the easier it is to foretell developments.

I doubt if the historic achievement of Konrad Adenauer is in any way lessened if one asserts that he was never a man of brilliant conceptions. It is only necessary to listen to his speeches (I would not recommend them for reading) to realise that his view of the world is as limited as his vocabulary. Few great statesmen have excelled the present German Chancellor in this respect, and Germany's intelligentsia has always taken this rather badly. No doubt the realities of world politics are incomparably richer and more subtle. The intellectuals' error has been in their assumption that this amounts to evidence against their Chancellor's political accomplishment. During his lifetime, or certainly in the period of his governmental office, he may not have had more than half-a-dozen ideas; perhaps less. But what matter, if some of these happened to be just the right ones?

The principal qualities of a statesman are less

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

breadth and perspective than a simple eye for fundamentals, and the strength of will to hold fast to a few essential things. If, more than that, he is (like Bismarck or Churchill) a man of language and cunning and magic, a master of both words and events, then history is in luck. With Adenauer, history has not quite been all that lucky. But it was he, who in his uncomplicated way, has done just those things that had to be done by a German statesman in the catastrophic situation after the Second World War. Others might have been cleverer, more imaginative, more skilful; and from sheer cleverness, imagination, and skill they reasoned hard European realities out of existence.

Adenauer's realities were these: that Germany lost the war and was no longer in a position to pursue an independent line of *Grossmachtpolitik;* that the Soviet Union looked upon the frontiers of the East-German communist state as its own "forward lines" which it was determined to hold in all circumstances; that all clever plans for German Reunification were meaningless if they did not recognise the ideological basis of Soviet policy; that a neutral Federal Republic would be an isolated one; that Germany (represented by this very Federal Republic as "the only legitimate German State corresponding to the will of the people") has few "natural" friends in the world and hence must create and maintain new friendships with a most prudent policy; and lastly, that the German influence on world policy could become incomparably more effective by means of enrolment in the Western alliance than by a state of isolation which would give the victorious powers cause to remember their common interests against the vanquished of 1945 ....

These have been the principles of the "Adenauer era". Was it somewhat one-sided and unsubtle? I am afraid it was. Many openings for German diplomacy remained unexploited because somehow they did not seem to fit into the *Konzept.* But Adenauer's few basic notions faced up to the problems of German post-war realities; the same cannot be said for the German political opposition, although the Socialists have mustered so many formidable arguments against the Chancellor. How superior they have always seemed during the foreign policy debates in the Bonn Parliament! The speeches of Schumacher were witty, brilliant, almost devastating, and not a few of his followers learned something from him. But ten years of skilful socialist debating and eloquent formulations have issued in neither persuasion nor power; for they were based on romantic German illusions.

Consider the new Social-Democratic *Deutschland-Plan.* Its authors (the restless much misunderstood, but also much mistaken, Herbert Wehner is no doubt chiefly responsible for this astonishing document) state, with the odd mysticism that so-called German pragmatism always takes, that they have taken their stand on "a foundation of facts." This is only true to the extent they have now, at long last, recognised the profound repugnance felt by the Eastern world-power towards a Germany "reunited in freedom." This is one fact which they had sedulously overlooked; this is almost a new "realism." But if it does begin to take some account of Soviet policy, it does not go to particular trouble to balance out the concessions it makes towards the East with some corresponding consideration of Western interests. The Social Democrats can never, to be sure, identify themselves with Soviet objectives (not to say East Berlin propaganda) — at least not short of committing political suicide — and so the *Deutschland-Plan* manages to bring Ollenhauer's party down with almost mathematical precision exactly between two stools.

Theoretically the Social Democrats have a point. A sensible policy for German unity (insofar as such a thing is possible in the present circumstances) has to reckon with the fact that the German territory on the other side of the river Elbe can be acquired peacefully by the *Bundesrepublik* only as a result of an understanding with the Soviet Union. The SPD has always been very serious in its devotion to the ideal of "freedom for 17 million" in the *Ostzone.* But for years their strategy was to win over the Soviet Union to the idea of German unity by a system of concessions; the less the Kremlin wanted to hear about German unity, the more concessions were recommended. Their new "Plan for Germany" signifies a new stage in the shadowy collective bargaining. Up till now the SPD has only been willing to sacrifice the German alliance with the West in order to secure Moscow's agreement to unification. Now it is prepared to offer the *neutrality* of the Federal Republic *without* demanding any Soviet counter-offer in return. It is suddenly inclined to treat the "Confederation" propaganda of the SED as if it were a *bona fide* offer (instead of a far-sighted piece of tactical trickery) — and how can it do so without (at least for a transitional period) treating the Ulbricht régime as legitimate and thereby recognising it?

Everything, it seems to me, suggests that the Plan (even if Khrushchev at present appears likely to accept some of its elements) is just a piece of romanticism. Even if it were possible to interest the Soviet Union in unification by this roundabout means (and that would involve great risks for the young and weak West German State) what would be gained thereby? Of course, the way to German unity is not by treating the Soviet Union as a *quantité négligeable;* but are there no dangers in treating the West in this way? An Opposition, out of power and likely to remain so, can generously overlook

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this difficulty by taking an historical view; a Government, with or without Adenauer, will not be in a position to afford such a luxury.

On these grounds, the apprehensions that have been attached (here in Germany and abroad) to the problem of a change in the post of Federal Chancellor appear to me to be pointless — as pointless as the hopes that such a change will alter German policy. Adenauer has been, to be sure, the embodiment of that policy, in its most consistent, inflexible, unruffled form; but he did not invent the policy, and it is not his monopoly. It was, I suggest, the simple, obvious, inevitable result of the international situation.

Is the "continuity" often mentioned in connection with Bonn's foreign policy guaranteed solely, or even principally, by the person of the present Chancellor? I doubt it. The principal guarantee lies in the fact that no other German foreign policy could hold up or hold together. The man who was about to move from the Palais Schaumburg to the Villa Hammerschmidt but then decided to remain has shown the vanity and idiosyncrasy of age. But slip-shod stage-management in the last scene, however embarrassing or even tragic, doesn't alter the point of the play. The man wrote the script and created the role. I cannot see why or how his successor, whoever (and whenever) he may be, can really depart from it.

F. R. Allemann

"The Two Cultures"

A Discussion of C. P. Snow's Views

An industrial metallurgist in the light-alloy field once told me, towards the end of the war, when every factory in England was preparing for the free-for-all it was assumed peace would bring, how his immediate boss, an accountant, dipt into the future, saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be. "All we need," he assured my friend, "is for you to produce an alloy combining the lightness of magnesium with the strength of steel, and we're there!" My friend laughed; but it was in fact no laughing matter. The accountant could not be persuaded of the impossibility of what he asked for, not, at any rate, by a mere metallurgist.

The story is interesting for the light it throws on the relation between scientists and non-scientists. As much as politics, science is the art of the possible; but for non-scientists it is magic. At least, some sciences are magic. It would, for example, be very useful in some parts of the world to produce a breed of sheep which combined the succulence of lamb chops with the ferocity of tigers. They could fight their own wolves. But not even the most ignorant layman would ever seriously suggest the crossing of sheep and tigers. Perhaps if biology had become the model science, and not physics, the split in our culture, which C. P. Snow so brilliantly describes, would not have occurred.

But it is the physical sciences that have made the modern world. It is the physical scientist who is the magician. He is the contemporary equivalent of that old friend of our children, the Slave of the Lamp. Which means that he is very much an underling: he makes his magic at the command of his masters.

One can't help feeling that the fear of science in our day is very much akin to the fear of the masses, of the urban workers, one finds so strongly in Victorian fiction, in Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and Charles Reade. And among all the fascinating things in Snow's lecture nothing is more fascinating for me than his comment on the class-distribution of scientists. His opinion is supported by the impression one gets from listening to the radio. Literary men have "cultured" voices; scientists not necessarily so at all. I should guess that to-day as many writers come from the working and lower-middle classes as scientists; but a conventional literary education is a main road into the Establishment, and a scientific education is not. The accents of many scientists show that they don't care—and good luck to them.

The whole subject bristles with "ifs". The contemporary situation would plainly be very different if the British Labour Party had begun as a Marxist party, for Marxism is rooted in the recognition of the existence and inevitability of industrialism. But one of the things that moved the early working-class Socialists of this country was anti-industrialism: their mentors were Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris, and the

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian Socialists who were an offshoot of the Oxford Movement.

We are involved in a series of contradictions. I accept Snow's diagnosis of the situation absolutely, and I am sure its urgency is no less than he says. At the same time, I have to realise that many of the writers of this century who have meant most to me, Yeats, Joyce, Eliot, Lawrence, Lewis, have been profoundly anti-science. I think Yeats was a great poet, but the structure of his beliefs seems to me nonsense: I suspect that this may mean that Yeats will appear a much less great poet in a hundred years' time.

How the breach between the two cultures is to be healed is another matter. I doubt if it will be brought about by radical changes. Some progress *is* being made. It is now possible to get a good scientific education at the public schools; and we have Churchill College on the way. I don't think we should get unduly excited or expect too much of current debates on the place of Latin in university entrance requirements. I am told that one famous Cambridge scientist voted for the retention of Latin because he believed boys specialising in the arts subjects at school should have something gritty to bite their teeth on. If the case for Latin consists only in this, the rejoinder is obvious. Why not let them do physics instead? As one of the very few writers, who, like Snow, exist in both cultures once said to me: "They can read Shakespeare for themselves." I don't think it is quite as simple as that; but if the dominant pattern of English education were suddenly to become scientific and not literary I believe those born to write would still write, precisely as Snow has done.

Walter Allen

A Unified Culture

In his Rede lecture Sir Charles Snow has so beautifully exposed the basic crisis of our existence that there is little I can do but add a pedestrian comment. Sir Charles derives some comfort from the lead which we have given in a few fields such as atomic energy. But the foundations of our success in atomic energy and radar were laid a long time ago. It seems to me that there is little comfort to be gained from a survey of our part in the strictly contemporary scientific revolution.

In space we have neither man, beast, nor instrument. One culture complains in elegant language about "martyred dogs in flying kennels" (*The Times*, May 25th), and the other culture has so little influence in the affairs of government that the basic needs of its own growth are stifled. The relentless drive, efficiency, and priority of Russian science and technology, with so many of the humane things which are valued in the West taking second place, is breaking the pattern of existence as we know it. Like Sir Charles Snow I should hate to live in it, but unless we behave at least with a reasonable awareness of the situation we'll have little part in the new world which is emerging from the scientific revolution.

The restoration of a unified culture which might give us a basis from which to handle the problem is being hindered by the new crisis in the universities. There the split seems to deepen as each side blames the other. As a university scientist I am impatient with those who oppose from within the scientific revolution in the universities. If they win, then the main stream of scientific development will take place outside the university system, and the two cultures will be forever separated. The other side should cease the attempt to maintain their cloistered existence which, however much we may regret it, belongs to a past age.

A. C. B. Lovell

Director,
Jodrell Bank Experimental Station,
Cheshire

Welfare or Release

Sir Charles Snow's diagnosis of the division in our culture may not be, in detail, the diagnosis that everyone would make, but few will doubt that his fears and anxieties are real enough. I do not think that the division is between a literary culture and a scientific one. Such an analysis is both too superficial and too unhistorical. It ignores a social process which has lasted for fifty years. Of course, there are difficulties of understanding between scientists and humanists although, even here, my experience as a don and as a tutor would make me want to modify Snow's conclusions.

Firstly, I think Snow underestimates the interest in science amongst young dons practising subjects which are roughly grouped together as humane studies. The world of science is obviously immensely powerful and that alone is bound to attract the interest of highly intelligent outsiders. The way it works, the problems it studies, its personalities and its achievements are objects of real curiosity. The characters of Nobel prize-winners, the significance of "no charity for parity", Zeta, whether Hoyle's view of continuous creation is or is not acceptable to mathematicians and astronomers, the way scientific research is organised, the relationship of research student and professor, I have heard

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all these things discussed time and time again at my own High Table between young dons belonging to Snow's separate cultures. What reluctance there is tends to come from the scientist. There is a certain, perhaps justified, arrogance on his part: he implies, even if he does not intend to do so, that it is scarcely worth his breath to talk about scientific matters with an outsider. On the other hand, the interest of young scientists in the work and achievement of the humanists is negligible, unless, which is rare, the scientist possesses a complex personality in which the needs of his imaginative life demand the consolations, fantasies and extensions of experience that painting, music or literature can give. But the scientists are not by themselves here; it is wrong to think that young lawyers, modern linguists, classicists and economists are interested, any more than scientists, in anything beyond their own craft. Some are, the bulk are not. Every year I interview a hundred or so young arts men; many of them look just as bewildered as Snow's young scientist if asked what they have read outside their subject. The majority of men in academic life are in it for professional purposes. They enjoy their professions, they are good at them, and their work completely satisfies their intellectual and temperamental needs. There is still, however, a goodly proportion in academic life, as in all other spheres of existence, who need different satisfactions, sometimes intellectual, sometimes temperamental, that leads them to savour and to enjoy a wide variety of human activities and experiences. And this division, of course, is not peculiar to our own times. The difference between William Shakespeare and William Perkins (who was certainly thought by the intellectuals of the Jacobean age to be a more significant figure) was as wide as that between Virginia Woolf and Rutherford.

Technicians and professional men will often be oblivious of the culture of the world in which they live: it is their nature, and it is pointless to fret about it. It always has been and always will be so. In the industrial world of today and tomorrow there will be, of course, many men in power, because it depends on technicians, who are opaque to artistic values. It is a pity, but it is irrelevant, against the huge gain in human happiness and security that the modern world has brought.

The trouble in Snow's world has causes different and deeper than those he gives. The literary world of London from 1910—50 was in the hands of a class who were being defeated by the social processes of this country.* They almost all belonged to the upper middle class, whereas the bulk of the literate, educated mass came from the lower middle and upper working classes to whom *The Waves* could be nothing but quaintly and bafflingly esoteric. Yet it is, of course, the lower middle and artisan classes that possess a vast undifferentiated appetite for culture. They are huge and omniverous readers — willing even to have a go at Woolf, Pound, Joyce — but are far happier with Bennett, Maugham, Wells, or early Lawrence. Yet half a million of them will buy Homer and tens of thousands spend their three-and-sixpences on Dante, Dostoievsky, Maupassant, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Dickens and the rest of the Penguin Classics. There are signs that publishers and authors, some twenty-five years after Sir Allen Lane demonstrated the fact, are beginning to realise the existence of this huge, culture-hungry public. Already it is beginning to throw up its own writers, dramatists, poets, historians and these will increase in numbers and stature. But for the last twenty or thirty years the literary culture offered to the young scientist, or young historian for that matter, has been too trivial for much of his attention. It has scarcely touched at all his social and personal problems. The future does not belong, however, to the established world of letters. Apart from literary dexterity most authors of repute lack almost everything that great writers need — robust and complex temperaments, a sense of the human condition (and that does not mean *gloom)* and an overwhelming curiosity, unprejudiced, unblinkered, insatiable, about the varieties of men and of experience. Any literary culture that venerates Kafka rather than Balzac is doomed to the obscurity it deserves.

The fault does not lie in the educational system, although I would not deny that it needs to be reformed, nor in the lack of sympathy for science on the part of the humanists though I admit that it could be more extensive. I would support anything that gave a scientist or an economist or a linguist a chance of escaping from the confines of his craft. These things will not, however, heal the division in our culture. The root of the trouble lies in the extremely poor quality — with a few honourable exceptions — of the creative talent in the arts in all countries of the world. This is due probably to the change which is taking place, whether violently as in Marxist countries or slowly as in capitalist ones, in the relations between classes; the modes and conventions of the old possessing classes have become too specialised, too private to hold much meaning for the ignorant, raw industrialised masses of the factory and the suburb. In Marxist countries their imaginative needs are cramped by the requirements of social discipline; in Western countries thwarted by a lack of social power. Time will change both.

* Certainly this sense of defeat was strengthened by the change in the relationship in the social value of a scientist and a writer, but it was not its cause.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Snow's dichotomy, therefore, is not really cultural but social — to the emerging classes of industrial society we have given welfare but not release. Their aspirations, dreams, entertainments are either sneered at or ignored. And it is left to the ancient classics, to Homer, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, to Michelangelo, Botticelli, Rembrandt, to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven to slake their cultural thirst. That most of them prefer Wilfred Pickles and Elvis Presley is quite irrelevant; both are less boring than gathering peascods on a village green.

J. H. Plumb

Christ's College,
Cambridge

The Whole Man

Like C. P. Snow, I have a foot in each of the two cultures, though planted less firmly in either. I studied bio-chemical sciences. Later I taught and practised law (a discipline whose affiliations would seem to lie more with the literary than with the scientific culture in spite of its "applied" quality), had a small experience in industry (with Sperry Gyroscope Company), and belong presently to a mixed genre of social scientists.

My wife is a writer of short stories and criticism. One of the tragedies of the fission of the two cultures that Snow does not discuss is that it serves so largely to divide the sexes from one another. It is rare in America for a girl to become interested in science and mathematics and her femininity is often thought to be at stake if she crosses this line. Correspondingly, there are still parts of this country where the sciences or engineering are the only appropriate subjects for a man's man so that if he does become a novelist, he will either have to pretend that he is not a literary man, or cross the line and identify himself as a homosexual. The scientific revolution of which Snow writes cannot begin until a society is no longer wholly patriarchal: as his example of the Sicilian girls in Rome implies, the scientific revolution cannot go forward as long as mothers cannot share it with their menfolk or childen. One's identity as a man or a woman is perhaps more ultimate even than the social snobberies which, as Snow so admirably describes, act as barriers between the literary and scientific cultures and between the latter and the applied fields.

But I have less confidence in the American system of education in these respects than Snow has. In the public high schools, it often happens that only the sciences are taught with vigour by men (who are also often the sports coaches) with whom the boys can identify themselves. As they go on to college, such boys are apt to continue identifying themselves with the scientific culture which offers obvious rewards and clear self-definitions. Even if our somewhat less specialised education at this level permits or forces them to take a course here and there on the literary side, they will get it over with as quickly as possible, and with as little threat or distraction as possible to their comforting answer to the question as to who they are. Conversely, it often happens, both in high school and college, that the sciences are pedantically and even sadistically taught, with no sense at all of revolution and only a humdrum sense of accomplished fact. And in that setting, even an awkward teacher of English could fall back on the glory of the books he assigns which (more than most scientific texts) can carry their own message without exegesis. Such a student, a girl or often an unusually sensitive and gifted boy, will be recruited into the literary culture and may try to overcome his feelings of being stupid in the sciences by attacking the crudity and inhumanity of the latter along lines Snow's article traces. Such a person may not even realise, until he becomes a graduate student, that English and the other humanities can muster up technologies every bit as arid as the most pedestrian organic chemistry.

The problem goes even deeper. Suppose our educational institutions were as convinced as Snow and I are that communication between the two cultures is essential to enrich the life of the mind — and to narrow the gap between the rich and poor nations. How would they, in fact, begin? It is one of Snow's themes that only the rarest of men moves easily in the two cultures, grasps possible connections between them, and can even envisage the intellectual possibility of a set of languages in which problems both of similarity and difference could be explored. Even the best programmes in general education in this country, which go a little way in the direction Snow advocates, still divide their faculties between the scientists and the humanists and ask the students to make syntheses which their teachers have not even adumbrated.

Meanwhile, the literary culture in America, although it has perhaps comparatively somewhat less prestige than in Britain, is far from defenceless. Institutions such as M. I. T. make a great effort to introduce their students to the humanities; businessmen and technical personnel, when they rise in corporate life, sometimes join "Great Books" courses. Occasionally this leads to ironies: for they are eager to talk about Aristotle or Picasso, and I only about their work (which they are bored with or slightly ashamed of). The danger in such programmes (in spite of much that is obviously valuable) is that they serve to confirm the cultural verdicts Snow is attacking and to perpetuate the fissure we would like to transcend. And of course on the

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other side, the members of the literary culture in this country feel protected by the scale of prestige from having to come to terms with the industrial and scientific revolutions — revolutions without which most of us (for our literary men are only slightly less apt to be parvenu than are scientists) would still live in precarious and barely educated poverty.

From this posture they will not be roused, I think, either by the triumphs of science or by the efforts inspired by the Cold War to tighten educational standards and step up the production of scientists and engineers. That is a negative and, in the long run, self-defeating goal whose bellicose competitive cast our best spirits will often reject. But the other goal to which Snow invites us, namely a campaign of sacrifice to see if India and the other pre-industrial countries cannot be saved from the onrushing Malthusian trap — that seems to me promising precisely because it is far-fetched and daring. The best Americans, whether trained in the literary or scientific spheres, are restless in the Affluent society, and I think they would respond to leadership which offered them another alternative. But the leadership must promise not only sacrifice, but the broadening of intellectual range and the opportunity to come to terms with what matters in life. For it has not been my experience that most scientists understand the scientific revolution in its world-wide aspects.

Some, indeed, have seemed to me so Philistine, so utterly divorced from the incomprehending men brought up in the literary culture, that out of mischance or despair they might well cooperate in destruction of the world with atomic or biological weapons.

It is this very situation of danger and opportunity that has led some scientists, just because they understand the scientific revolution, to leave science and to become city planners, civil servants, or applied anthropologists. As Snow notes, the jump from the "pure" to the "applied" is often as great a leap down the ladder of prestige as can be found within the *academic* establishment between the more and the less prestigeful "pure fields". It is the intellectual as well as the moral opportunity of applied work which has to be spelled out in detail: to show, for instance, what a stimulus it has been for theoretical economics, to have to cope with the problems of the "underdeveloped" countries and how it has loosened up the relations between some economists and their anthropological or social-psychological colleagues.

What Snow is asking is that we become whole men again, living in the modern world (rather than in some enclave labelled "science" or "literature") even while we change that world to make it more possible for us to be whole. He is asking, as Karl Marx did, for an end to alienation. Marx thought the industrial revolution would do that, but it hasn't. The scientific revolution has only perpetuated the gap and seen both the separate cultures get fatter. We must start again for our own sakes as well as for the sake of the planet.

David Riesman

Snobbery

DEAR SNOW,

I have been reading your Rede Lecture with very great interest and as much pleasure as the subject-matter permitted. All that you say as to what ought to be done commands my assent. The separation between science and culture is very much greater than it used to be. In the time of Charles II it did not exist, and in the early nineteenth century there were still many bridges from one territory to the other. Cartwright, who invented the power-loom, was my grandfather's tutor and taught him to construe the odes of Horace. So far as I have been able to discover, his invention of the power-loom remained unknown to my grandfather. Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South* and Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* allow an intrusion of the world of industry into the world of culture. I live just above a causeway constructed by Shelley's friend Maddox with Shelley's enthusiastic support. The early Romantics had a completely romantic admiration for science on the lines of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Do you remember Peacock's account of Robert Owen's co-operative parallelograms with a steam engine in the middle as maid-of-all-work? The corresponding modern ideas are known only to children in the form of science comics. I wish you all success, but I fear that as a nation we would rather lose all than sacrifice one particle of snobbery.

Bertrand Russell

What Can Be Done?

I AGREE with most of what Charles Snow has said. It is true enough that scientists as a class do not have any great literary sensibility and are not able to join intelligently in discussions of the literary intellectuals. Nevertheless, they do, on the average, read pretty widely and they are more interested in music and the visual arts than most of the humanists. It is also true that the literary intellectuals, through the lack of comprehension of science, are failing to appreciate one of the most creative elements in our life today, whilst at the highest national level the same lack of understanding makes it difficult for our political leaders to see

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what must be done if we are to hold our own in the world of the future.

If we look through the iron curtain — now a good deal more transparent — we see that the scientific and technical strength of the East is now about equal to that of the West, whilst its growth rate is much higher than that of the West. The U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences is to double its strength in 7 years, whilst we are content with a doubling time of 15 years for our scientific and engineering strength. It is not entirely a coincidence that the growth rate of their economy is twice that of the West.

What is to be done about this? The separation of the cultures undoubtedly begins in the sixth form years of our grammar schools and public schools. The blame for this is now put on the University examiners and they ought to make a determined effort to break this vicious circle. We hope in Churchill College to play our part in this.

I am not a great believer in trying to mend this damage in the University years by formal lectures on science for the Arts men and potted culture for the scientists. General education at the Universities is best left to the normal mixing up of undergraduates in colleges and hostels, but for this to be effective it is necessary for our Redbrick and Blackstone Universities to have far more residential accommodation. When I was a member of a Blackstone University I travelled backwards and forwards 20 miles every day, and it was not until I later went to Cambridge that I was exposed to this mixing process — with great advantage to myself.

During the last 50 years we have continued to produce a flow of inventions and scientific discoveries which has maintained our prestige and influence in the world in a remarkable way. These inventions and discoveries depend on the top five per cent of our scientific population, and if we ever lose this ability our decline will be certain. If we are to hold our best young people they must be assured of facilities for work which are reasonably comparable with those of the United States, and this requires that the total amount we devote to comparable fields of science should be not less than one fifth the scale of the U.S. If we take a look at the figures we see that the U.S. spend about 650 million dollars a year on basic research — about 10 times our figure — while the U.S.S.R. probably spend twice as much. The U.S. spend 300 million dollars a years on Medical Research whilst we spend less than £10 million.

We are far from making the best use of our existing strength in the Universities and there is a constant temptation to migrate to the U.S. where facilities and salaries are more favourable. For example, the salaries of professors in Cambridge have only doubled since the war whilst the cost of living has risen 2.8. times.

In our attempts to help the underdeveloped countries we have the greatest difficulty in finding the scientists and engineers to help them to build up their economy. This is a symptom of our national shortage. We are making a great effort to provide new buildings for our universities and technical colleges. The danger is that we shall provide the bricks and mortar without the scientific equipment and first-class young people who can breathe life into them. I do not think that it is beyond our national competence and financial strength to put this right, but we must get our priorities straight and build firm foundations for our future.

Sir John Cockcroft

Churchill College Trust
Cambridge

Art v. Intellect?

THIS morning the art critic of *The Observer* condemned in me an "excess of intellect." If he is right, then the position from which I may comment upon Sir Charles Snow's profoundly important Rede Lecture is a curiously uncomfortable one. Clearly I may not share intellectually in either of the Two Cultures and escape censure, for to recognise the cogency and urgency of Sir Charles' arguments and to admit that I do so, obviously endangers my already shaky tenure of a place in what might today be called the artists' annexe to the twin houses of the mind.

It is really only that I am accused of possessing too much intellect to be a good artist and whilst this may not seem very pertinent to Sir Charles' proposition, it is not irrelevant. If the plastic arts are to have a truly significant place in human affairs, the reconciliation of the Two Cultures, which he so powerfully advocates, must include a reconciliation of the same order with the plastic arts, if society is not to be impoverished.

With the Greeks, the visual arts walked with science and in particular with mathematics. During the Renaissance, art had as much in common with science as it had with literature. The intellectual quality was one so much revered in the artist that Vasari, seeking the highest term of praise, called Ambrogio Lorenzetti "philosopher" and Pomponius Gauricus described Mantegna as "learned". Piero della Francesca was the greatest mathematician of his age, Francisco di Giorgio among the most remarkable inventors, and Leonardo truly the "universal man". The subsequent marriage of art and literature has been a close one. Even where they diverged, it has been the writer who has explained the artist: hence Baudelaire on Delacroix, Apollinaire on Picasso and Sartre

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on Giacometti (in a curiously inverse ratio to the degree to which, in mediaeval times, art explained literature and Giotto's visual commentary at Padua explains the writings of the pseudo-Buonaventura). The artist has, in fact, been closely associated with one or other of the Two Cultures during their entire history. Today he is not. He has been removed, or removed himself, to a limbo of "anti-intellect."

The designation "intellectual," despite G. H. Hardy's mild complaint, is in fact honourably worn by men of science. In literature and philosophy (and in all those fields of scholarship which depend upon conceptual thinking), the term "intellectual" is acceptable, albeit with some slight embarrassment. In the visual arts, the appellation is straightforwardly pejorative. No greater condemnation could be made than that a painter should merit the accusation of an excess of intellect, and I suspect that great damage is being done to the artist's faculties by this continual insistence that his intellect is his enemy.

A different order of perception is assumed to be the province of the artist wherein emotional and sensual responses are sufficient perfectly to equip him and this has served further to isolate him from society. It is profoundly significant that on at least one occasion during the twentieth century when art and science came within hailing distance, the artists beat a hasty retreat and the scientists looked blankly on.

Cubism, which, for a brief period, might have embraced concepts as profoundly important to the twentieth century as the geometry of Euclid had been hitherto, deliberately disavowed any intellectual content, explicitly rejected even the remotest connection with any but aesthetic implication, and (perhaps in spite of Juan Gris) sold itself into decoration; so that a method of pictorial analysis, which might have created a new synthesis between conceptual mathematics and painting, snuffed itself out. One has only to read Kandinsky or Mondriaan to see that even the most respected theorists among practising artists have lost the faculty to think clearly and equally one has only to remember the defection of Marcel Duchamp, perhaps the keenest analytical mind in twentieth-century painting, to realise how destructive is the pressure brought upon the artist to neglect his mind. It is a special form of Luddite instinct, and it results from the tenaciously held modern prejudice that the artist's province *must not be of the mind* but seated elsewhere.

The visual arts have, during the last hundred years, deliberately cut themselves away from both the Two Cultures with which Sir Charles' lecture deals, and have been aided in doing so at every stage by literary men. Scientists have not concerned themselves. The result, in my view, is one of crisis. The artist has even less understood the Industrial Revolution or the Scientific Revolution than the literary man. At least one writer, in the person of Sir Charles Snow, has sufficient connection with science to utter his impressive warning. One cannot think of many painters or sculptors who would be equipped to conceive a public truth of this order as relevant to them and to their work.

I myself am left, after reading *The Two Cultures,* with a feeling of grave inadequacy, and it is not the inadequacy which the art critic of *The Observer* imputes to me. It is not an excess of intellect from which I suffer but a limited and insufficiently developed one. I know nothing of any law of thermodynamics, and arithmetic, as taught, has stood between mathematics and myself all my life. If I had been equipped with perception of the sciences, I might have been even less what is required of the painter today, but I should have more faith in my ultimate value as a creative artist. Seurat, the last great master to attempt a reconciliation with science, failed ultimately to achieve it because, in the end, his intellect was not adequate to the task he set himself. If I myself dimly discern a common ground on which an Einstein could walk with a Piero della Francesca, I am far more ludicrously ill-equipped to approach it than was Seurat.

The artist is nervously aware of this condition, and his intuitive perception urges him to come to terms in some way with what he senses to be the Scientific Revolution. The result is a confused mass of what might be called "Science Fiction Imagery," and critics are quick to point out the significance of the superficial resemblance of some abstract painting to microbiology, or maybe astronomy, and the relationship of sculpture to the models of equations resolved as solid geometry. It is all quite bogus and quite sincere.

Twentieth-century sculpture and painting have been rich in talent, intuitive perception, courage and creative power. What has been lacking is intellect, in no small measure because society has been so determined to regard its painting and sculpture as sensual rather than total experience. Picasso once furiously remarked that art was not a decoration of life but a weapon. If that is so, it needs sharpening.

Michael Ayrton

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Praising Famous Men

By Hilary Corke

WELL,* evidently one cannot review that. Let us pass on quietly to some other matter.

One could try to manage it without once using that distressing vogue-word *Establishment:* would that be amusing? No, not really.

But consider. This deliciously fat Oxfordy volume contains 725 biographies by perhaps five hundred authors in over a thousand double-column pages. And what have these illustrious dead in common other than the decade of their dying? Here are scientists, war-heroes, cricketers, writers, politicians, dukes; every sort of somebody except a nobody. And what have their biographers in common? An easier question: for self-effacement, attention to fact, and soundly unadventurous English are so universal that it is scarcely feasible to tell them apart. They have everything in common: and it is quite impossible to find anything whatever to say about them. Let us look for something else to review, shall we?

All the same, the very existence of the fat Oxfordy volume nags, as the existence of the hippopotamus nags, for instance, if one comes to think about it, and especially if the hippopotamus is in the garden. And it strikes one that these 725 biographies have at least one thing in common. They are there. They are in the D.N.B., I mean; they are in the belly of the hippopotamus, and it is a beast very choosey as to its diet. If one takes a personalist view of history — a view admittedly out-moded — then one might say that what one knows as "history" is essentially the sum of precisely such lives. Add these up and that is what we are: by *we* meaning "the race," "the nation," "England" — also conceptions that, like other racialist-nationalist conceptions, time cannot outmode fast enough. And then one falls to thinking about these 725 persons, in no sense representative, indeed in each case exceptional: including no "ordinary people," no John Doe, Tommy Atkins, rank-and-filer, man-in-the-street; consisting in fact of those who, in the presumption of the editors, acted upon their time rather than were acted upon by it. And one wonders what qualities sustained them, what combinations of heredity and pure good fortune elevated them, what professions were most favourable to them, what of their individualities once stripped of their social function, what they thought of when their dancing days were over?

There are certainly no short answers to such questions, and possibly no long answers either. But one can make rough divisions, remembering the Shakespearean distinction between the greatnesses that men are born to, achieve, or have thrust upon 'em: and perhaps the primary division is between those who are great because of what they did and those who are great because of what they were. If you become Prime Minister, for instance, you can scarcely escape D.N.B. enshrinement. But being Prime Minister is something you are rather than do (and probably whatever you do in order to achieve it is of no great significance on any long-term basis); and so it comes about that Prime Ministers, ambassadors, industrialists, master administrators of all kinds, may well have no especial qualities other than the qualities of their functions. Stripped of their functions, they may even be below the average of their fellows. The Governor returns from administering the lives and fortunes of ten million subjects (and administering them remarkably well) to a villa in Wimbledon where he collects postage-stamps, plays bowls, and fails to understand the times — and *The Times* too for that matter. This is a great pitfall for those who think of themselves as "intellectuals." On any sort of criteria that they can postulate, they find themselves more intelligent, able and alert than the old walrus in Wimbledon: but, so far from asking them to go

* *The Dictionary of National Biography: 1941–50.* Edited by L. G. WICKHAM LEGG and E. T. WILLIAMS. Oxford University Press. 105 s.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out and govern New South Wales, society condemns them to the production of unsaleable novels in Notting Hill bed-sitting rooms. The sillier "intellectuals" imagine that this is simply because they themselves were not born to the Est — Estimable portion of society. Those a little wiser will disclaim the desire to govern, and particularly to put up with the rigours of the thirty years' preparation for governorship: they will postulate their fastidiousness which forbids them the hustings, their concern with higher matters which forbids them the weary follies of the legal text-book, their sense of individual dignity which forbids them either to strictly obey or be obeyed.

A little wiser still, and they will look away from themselves and towards the human make-up of those who administer them. This they will define in terms of negative qualities. The "great man" — or rather the man in great position — is deemed to become so by virtue of certain lacks. He is "sound," because this will inspire confidence on the part of those whose business it will be to promote him. He will even be "brilliant," on exactly the same terms; that is to say, of brilliance conceived only as an intensification and ultimate degree of soundness — he will get the double-first in Classics and History, he will pass in top by the Civil Service Exam. But he will *not* exhibit the sort of mental brilliance that consists in taking both feet off the ground at once: that is, on the contrary, essentially *un*sound and he will get so far (shoved to the top of some peripheral backwater) but no farther. Similarly, he will be strong on practice and not theory. Administration, like politics, is the art of the possible; while the mind of the "intellectual" is concerned with the not possible, or the not possible yet. He may be allowed a regulation eccentricity or two — indeed the odd whimsy of a conventional type (a cliché oddity, so to speak) will be to his advantage; but he will be basically "ordinary," "normal." For the essence of his success will be his ability to "deal with people"; and any excess, any suspicion of the outré or the unprecedented, will put "people" off. He has to work in his material. And his material is pretty ordinary stuff, full of ordinary stuff's conventions and resentments. On this view, the career of the successful administrator is a lifetime of the *tertium quid*. The man at the top is the man whom there was never anything against.

THAT cannot be the whole of the story; though it is as far as the "intellectual" will usually care to go. If he does go farther, however, he will begin to define the great man (taking this always, for the moment, to mean the great administrator) in terms of qualities which are positive not negative. Thus the administrator may well have, to all intents and purposes, an actually "better" brain than his half-mocking half-envious critic. Devoid of all imagination, devoid of all wit, lightness, responsiveness and even quickness of apprehension, he might yet be equipped with a more positively useful intellectual machine, one that can go skimming through great sheafs of documents, can retain great columns of unrelated numbers, can in fact (what the other's brain could never compass) assimilate the uninteresting; and can moreover keep working for hours and days and weeks long at this pitch without knocking, pinking, tapping or showing metal-fatigue. Then he will have a sense of priorities, a sense of balance and counter-balance, a gift for concentration on the relevant. His ability to march down high-roads while denying himself the alluring side-tracks may be taken perhaps as one of his negative virtues, an insensitivity to the charm of the inessential: but his ability to detect and distinguish the high-road from the side-tracks may not. Nor may his gift for continuity of effort in a single direction. These are all positive intellectual virtues that are perhaps less rather than more likely to be possessed by the so-called "intellectual".

And there will be what one might call moral virtues too. Most notably, there will be complete integrity. Our model great administrator is a man to keep secrets; when his lips are sealed, not even a loving wife can unzip them. He does not even cheat the Inland Revenue. He is completely loyal to his own ideals, and is typically genuinely unselfseeking. Indeed, taking his intellectual and moral qualities together, the one piece of statistical information given us by Messrs. Wickham Legg and Williams is entirely appropriate: more than one in seven of their illustrious subjects were sons of the parsonage or of the manse. The "intellectual" will tend to denigrate or even to forget the very existence of such qualities as truth-telling and secret-keeping, simply because they form no essential part of the working of his own personality.

By such lights in effect the majority of the lives in the *D.N.B.* have evidently been lived. My other great division remains, of those who have been eminent rather by virtue of what they have done than of what they were. Here come, jostling at first perhaps rather surprisingly together, the scientists and artists — discoverers and inventors of all kinds. And now the template for "greatness" suddenly begins to look very different. It would be exaggerated to claim that all the preceding criteria are reversed; as it would be both tiresome and uncomplimentary to the reader to rehearse those criteria again and examine severally the propositions of their reversal. It is enough to remark that, for instance, "soundness" never got any artist anywhere (except of course into the R.A.); that

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCHILLER'S

Mary Stuart

Freely adapted and translated by

STEPHEN SPENDER

Stephen Spender's version of a classic of the German theatre, produced at last year's Edinburgh Festival and subsequently at the Old Vic. With a Preface by Peter Wood and an Introduction by Mr Spender. 15/-

Homage to Mistress Bradstreet

JOHN BERRYMAN

"*Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* is a major poem beyond all question."—FRANK KERMODE, *Spectator* The volume includes a selection of shorter poems, chosen by Mr Berryman himself. 18/-

A Matter of Life and Death

ANNE RIDLER

A new collection of Mrs Ridler's poems including *Evenlode* "A Fable of Rivers" designed for broadcasting. 12/6

LEON TROTSKY'S

Diary in Exile 1935

The complete text of the diary Trotsky kept during 1935, while he was in France and Norway. The volume also contains his Testament, written in Mexico in 1940, six months before he was murdered. 21/-

Critique of Religion and Philosophy

WALTER KAUFMANN

"This is the most intellectually exciting modern book on the philosophy of religion that I have come acrosss."— ANTHONY QUINTON. Mr Kaufmann is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. 25/-

FABER & FABER

ever a scientist is obliged to explore his sidetracks, as Fleming explored the wind-blown accident of his penicillium spore; that good novels are not written by keeping secrets and one's word. The "intellectual" can begin to rediscover his self-respect by considering propositions of this nature: — if A had not become Ambassador to Madhousia, then B would; if C had not become managing director of Cheatex, then D would; if E had not become Master of Brainwool College, then F would. Then A, C, and E would no longer have been "great men" and would not have found enshrinement in the *D.N.B.*; and B, D, and F would. But in no case would the differences resulting from such alterations in appointment have risen to any significant level. The world would have gone on more or less unaltered. If we then turn to the sciences, the picture is altered in degree certainly. If G had not discovered streptomycin, then H would? Yes, in point of fact H *would:* he might not have discovered it for thirty years, and the sum total of human misery would have been much increased by the delay, but in the end H or I or J would have discovered it. The mysteries of the world about us are indeed lying there in so many locked boxes: the keys await the finding. But when we come finally into the sphere, not of discovery, but of creation, the whole landscape turns upside down. If M had not written *Comus*, never in the whole long length of all possible human endeavour, past present and future, could it come into existence. If Chaplin had not invented himself, there would be by that much a permanent gap in the complex face of modern sensibility as we know it.

THE "intellectual" may, not irrationally, take heart therefore. He will take note, of course, that — as in all such cases — exceptional men may span artificial divisions. The average politician, we may say, is no more than a function-man: but a Churchill or a Gandhi (included in the *D.N.B.* on the curious ground of his technical British nationality) is clearly an action-man as well. He will also take note, and more heart thereby, that it is precisely the uniquely creative man, and he only, who remains firmly in the intelligent public's eye. All the others, administrators and scientists alike, and no matter how they may have changed or directed our physical lives, remain curiously unknown. If this be doubted, consider any random run of half-a-dozen names from the work under review. (Herbert) Barker, Barkla, Barlow, Barrington-Ward, (Sidney) Barton, (Percy) Bates: who are they? The answers are: founder of manipulative surgery; polarizer of X-rays; isolator of infantile scurvy; editor of *The Times*; diplomat in Shanghai and Abyssinia; chairman of Cunard. I myself knew about two-and-a-half of them, and must confess I dearly

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wish it could have been more. The whole thing is in a way, like a gigantic and final Honours List. We scan *The Times* on the Birthday, and whenever we come to a painter or an actor we cry out "Aha!", and try out "Sir Stanley" or "Sir Michael" on the tongue: and maybe we happen to know somebody's uncle in "the Service." And that is the long and the short of it. But as for the hundreds of names of those who are actually keeping the wheels going, the valves oiled, the knobs polished, it is the first and last we hear of them. Well, well, I suppose it ought to give us pause.

So, it appears that the *idea* of the *D.N.B.* may provide food for reflection, even though the performance of it does not. Why then the sense of bathos, the faint unease, the sketchy gesture of despair? Simply because the whole thing reeks of the Est — of the Estuary? It surely does; but hardly that. Because of the exclusions? They are not serious. As far as names go, I could not think of a single excludee whom I would whole-heartedly back. (I could think of one or two of earlier decades — Firbank, for instance — who will have to go into the next supplement.) It is a curious thing, but by the time that death has supervened even the most outrageous of creative rebels seems entirely fitted for inclusion in the Est — in the *estomac* of the hippopotamus. Orwell, Wells, Joyce, they are all here; and so next time will Wyndham Lewis be, and Dylan Thomas. The exclusions of matter? That is more serious. I examined the lives of three known homosexuals, and found the fact mentioned in none; of three persons who died insane, and found the fact omitted in two and only hinted at in the third; of two persons who died by their own hands, and found the fact omitted in one, but squarely faced in the other (Lord David Cecil's model account of Virginia Woolf). Such subjects as homosexuality, insanity, suicide are of course anathema to the Est — the Estate-manager mentality, which prefers to disseminate a cautious optimism in all directions.

No, if it is isolatable at all, I believe it is the sense of the lives slipping through the fingers, the ghosts bogged down in the facts. There is nothing to raise the spirits here, nothing to kindle the imagination. The existences, for one cannot really call them lives, roll on, reel after reel, womb to tomb, punctuated by hand-stands and decorations, baronetcies, baronies and little stiff bows toward the wings. But nothing comes alive, nothing takes both feet off the ground together ever. And really, after a couple of hours of it, one would rather go and join the — Estragon-and-Vladimir set?

Growing Up in Paris

By J. G. Weightman

It is intimidating to review a book by Simone de Beauvoir, because you feel that this Amazon of the intellect could put an end to your impertinent fumblings with one movement of her powerful brain. What might be called her suffragette *persona* is not as strong, in this first volume of her autobiography,* *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, as it was in her study of woman, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, but it is still there.

She makes the reader conscious of the fact that he is a man and that his ideas are probably not as definite as they ought to be. She is much nearer to the tone of Lady Violet Bonham Carter, who is twenty years her senior and shares none of her opinions, than she is to that of Mary McCarthy or Iris Murdoch, who are comparable American and English intellectuals. I remember being surprised by the old-fashioned note of *Le Deuxième Sexe* when it came out in 1947, and by its deadly humourlessness, except in those passages, where, with magnificent verve, Simone de Beauvoir slaughtered some footling male such as Claude Mauriac or Henry de Montherlant. The autobiography explains *Le Deuxième Sexe*. I shouldn't have been surprised; I knew that there had never been a thoroughgoing feminist revolution in France and that the French Catholic bourgeoisie was more narrow-minded and conservative than any part of the English middle-class. If Simone de Beauvoir had

* *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*. By Simone de Beauvoir. Translated by James Kirkup. André Deutsch and Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 30 s.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been born in England in 1908, she would by now, very probably, have been a Dame or even a member of the House of Lords. As it was she had to wage, almost single-handed, the sort of struggle we associate with Florence Nightingale, and she could only become one of those intellectuals who, while remaining intensely French, are really outside the national community.

Simone de Beauvoir's previous works could, I think, arouse only feelings of respect. This one makes her likeable, because it shows the human being inside the philosopher. She is still extremely solemn, of course. (The only gleam of humour she shows is in her title; she is not a *jeune fille rangée* but very much a *jeune fille sortie du rang*. Incidentally, in *Les Mandarins*, too, she had an ironical title, which was not in keeping with the general tenor of her book. Perhaps her titles are suggested by someone else.) But she sees herself very clearly: —

> ... the first thing I noted was what I called my "serious side." An implacable, austere seriousness, for which I can find no reasonable explanation, but that I submit to as if it were a burden I *have* to bear. Since my infancy, I had always been headstrong, self-willed, a creature of extremes, and proud of it. Others might stop halfway in their quest for faith or in the expression of their scepticism, their desires, their plans; I despised their half-heartedness. I always carried my emotions, my ideas, my enterprises to the bitter end; I didn't undertake anything lightly; and now, as in my earliest childhood, I wanted everything in my life to be justified by a kind of absolute necessity. This stubbornness, I realised, deprived me of certain qualities; but there was never any question of departing from my fixed intention; my "serious side" was the whole of me, and I wanted very much to remain a "whole" person.

Given this temperament, it was a foregone conclusion that she would feel stifled in the highly conventional atmosphere of the orthodox middle-class, into which she had been born. The story of her long battle is so foreseeable in its various stages, and she herself knows the literature on the subject and the psychological and sociological text-books so well, that her account has the matter-of-factness of a case history rather than the excitement of a confession. There will not be much that is new here for the assiduous reader of French novels about bourgeois life, and more particularly for anyone who knows that excellent study, *Les Boussardel*, by Philippe Hériat. There cannot be, because the astonishing thing about the French conservative bourgeoisie is that it is so stereotyped and so tough. Most of the year in a flat in Paris, a month or two of the summer on some modest country estate belonging to the family or to friends, everywhere the same small round of superficial piety and careful materialistic living: such was the pattern that Simone reacted against. All the classic phases are noted; the first awareness of the self as a person, gradual disillusionment with grown-ups, the realisation of the fact of death, the occasional phases of mysticism, the ultimate loss of faith, the first homosexual and heterosexual stirrings, the passionate attachment to all that represented the possibility of escape from the asphyxiating grip of the family, and the final emergence into clear, universal daylight.

Although, during childhood, she had occasionally rebelled against adult authority when she could not see the reasons for its decisions, on the whole her force of character merely made her imitate grown-up attitudes with an energetic priggishness. Her mother upheld the atmosphere of narrow bourgeois piety, while her father, having a *nom à particule*, affected a more aristocratic superiority. Since Mme. de Beauvoir never comes to life as a character in the book, it is clear that Simone's interest centred on her father, whom she at first admired and adored. He was just aristocratic enough to be a failure as a bourgeois, and just intellectual enough to be incoherently interested in literature and the theatre; he considered Anatole France as the greatest contemporary writer yet at the same time was an anti-Dreyfusard and a xenophobe. For Simone, the proof of his inadequacy was the starting point for her painful break with acquired assumptions, and a blessing in disguise. Their money had been largely in Russian bonds and M. de Beauvoir proved incapable of making good the loss. It was the decline in their fortunes after the First World War that allowed Simone to study and pass examinations. Had her parents remained comfortably off and been able to provide dowries for their two daughters, there might have been no escape from the hated round of empty social duties and the *mariage de convenance*. As it happened, her mother and father both wanted her to be able to earn her living and were perplexed and dismayed by her passion for unladylike studies. Eventually, the little girl who had started in a tiny private Catholic school grew up into a student who got through the extremely difficult *agrégation de philosophie* as runner-up to Jean Paul Sartre. This was a remarkable achievement, when you consider that he had had the triple advantage of masculinity, an efficient secular education, and a scholarship to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*.

Actually, the most striking part of the story is not Simone de Beauvoir's success, but the parallel failure of two of her contemporaries — her best friend, Zaza, and her cousin, Jacques, with whom she was in love, or thought she was in love, for a number of years. Clearly, neither had the intellectual power which allowed Simone to forge ahead in spite of discouragement

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and opposition. Jacques was a handsome, charming youth, who inherited a small family business while still quite young. He introduced Simone to modern literature, gave her her first taste of sophisticated conversation and seemed, more than once, on the point of proposing to her. But his intellectual phase soon came to an end. He had the usual affair with a lower-class mistress, then made a conventional *mariage de convenance,* proved to be an unsuccessful business-man, was abandoned by his wife, took to drink and died at the age of forty-six. Zaza had the misfortune to be better off, and more involved emotionally in the bourgeois situation, than Simone; she was genuinely fond of her mother, a stronger character than Mme de Beauvoir, and continued to believe in the Christian virtue of obedience. Her persecution was correspondingly more severe. She fell in love with an eligible young man but was forbidden to marry him because of an inter-family quarrel. When she resisted other attempts to marry her off, she was despatched to Berlin University ("abroad" was, and perhaps still is, a place of exile or a haven of refuge for recalcitrant French daughters). After a tug of war that had lasted several years, Zaza fell in love with another, fairly eligible, young man, but he hesitated to conclude the marriage, because he did not want to hurt his mother's feelings by leaving her too soon. Zaza suddenly went out of her mind and died of meningitis.

IF THE English reader, not having seen the inside of this conservative bourgeois world, has been puzzled by the constant anti-bourgeois note in modern French culture, and needs further proof of the astounding bourgeois narrowness, other details can be quoted. For instance, Simone and her sister were nineteen and seventeen, respectively, when they plucked up enough courage to insist that their mother should not open and read their correspondence before handing it to them. How remote they were from what is often considered as ordinary French life can be judged from the following quotation, which refers to the time when Simone and Zaza were students: —

> We got into the habit of going for a walk together every Sunday morning. It would hardly have been possible for us to have an intimate talk either at her house or mine; and we were completely ignorant as to the purpose of cafés: "But what are all those people there for? Haven't they got homes?" Zaza asked me once as we were passing the Café de la Régence. . . .

When Simone finally broke away, she went through a period of wild exhibitionism, precisely in cafés and bars: –

Clear and Strong

America is an enigma, always intriguing, sometimes frightening. No country projects so confusing an image of its true spirit upon the world. For, as the readers of *Encounter* know, behind the apparent contradictions and complacencies of its politics and policies, lies a vigorous, intelligent and liberal society, sophisticated and critical, as concerned with freedom as it is intolerant of stale ideas.

In THE REPORTER, America's liberal fortnightly, this vigorous tradition now finds its clearest and strongest voice. Its international reports drawn from a wide circle of writers around the world; its exploration of the intriguing new frontiers of social experiment and science; its interpretation of the unending drama of American politics; and its gay and incisive drawings and reviews have established THE REPORTER, in only ten years, as one of the most remarkable and illuminating journals in the free world.

Ask your newsagent for a copy, or post this order direct

THE REPORTER

2/– each fortnight

TRANSWORLD CIRCULATION COMPANY, PARK ROYAL ROAD, LONDON, N.W. 10

Please send me THE REPORTER for

One year: 24 issues 56s. Od. } post free
Six months: 12 issues 28s. Od. }

Name .....

Address .....

.....

I enclose cheque or P.O./Send me a bill.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TWO CITIES

La revue bilingue de Paris

The second number is now available.

Articles, poems, reviews etc. by Richard Wright, Henry Miller, Malcolm de Chazal, Lawrence Durrell, Dom Moraes, Anaïs Nin, and by a number of new writers – in either English or French.

Price for this and subsequent numbers, 5/– post free, or £1 annually, from Edwin Mullins, 19 B Stafford Terrace, London, W.8.

TV awards for new writers

As part of TV's urgent drive for new writers, leading TV producer Dennis Vance is making an annual award of £250 to the Television Writing School student whose first one-hour play is judged "Best of the Year".

The winning play will be directed by Dennis Vance himself. This is the most valuable introduction to professional TV scriptwriting ever given. Options will be taken on the five next best plays, which will also earn consolation awards.

TWS has been selected by Dennis Vance as the school best equipped to produce trained writers of the calibre he requires. For full details about the School's correspondence course and "Student of the Year" awards write to:

THE TELEVISION WRITING SCHOOL, DEPT. E.R., HARLEY STREET LONDON W.1

> If a customer came in with his hat on, I would shout "Hat!" and throw his headgear up to the ceiling. From time to time, I would smash a glass or two. I would hold forth, accosting "regulars," whom I naïvely tried to mystify; I would give myself out to be a model or a tart.... Occasionally, someone would offer me a drink or invite me to dance, nothing more; apparently I didn't incite them to lubricity....

There is something sad and touching about such an honest admission. You can see why, in *Le Deuxième Sexe,* Simone de Beauvoir was so eager to call a penis a penis, sometimes with (what seem to me, at least) unconsciously comic effects. A thoroughly bourgeois upbringing, like a certain type of English public school training, probably marks you so deeply that you can only negate it, never get away from it.

ONE way of summing up Simone de Beauvoir's early career as related in this volume would be to say that she was struggling simultaneously to assert her right, as a woman, to a life of her own, and to discover a philosophy that would give a meaning to life in general. She won a double victory. As a woman, she achieved fame and independence, and as a thinker she eventually found satisfaction in Existentialism. Another way, however, of seeing a pattern in the book would be to say that after she lost her faith in her father's character and intelligence, she was looking for a man who would provide her with the relief of a masculine ideal. In this respect, she was more feminine, and — dare we say so? — perhaps more submissively bourgeoise, than might at first appear. The milestones in her story are the men she looked up to and who then turned out to be weaker and less intelligent than herself: her cousin, Jacques, Garric, a Catholic liberal, Nodier, another philosopher, Herbaud and Pradelle, her fellow-students at the Sorbonne. But at last she found Sartre, who provided her with both a philosophy and a masculine terminus: —

> It was the first time in my life that I had felt myself intellectually inferior to anyone else. Garric and Nodier who were much older than me, had impressed me in their time: but their dominance had been remote and vague, and I had had no chance of measuring up to them in person. Day after day, and all day long I set myself up against Sartre, and in our discussions I was simply not in his class.... In the end, I had to admit I was beaten.... Sartre corresponded exactly to the dream companion I had longed for since I was fifteen; he was the double in whom I found all my burning aspirations raised to the pitch of incandescence. I should always be able to share everything with him. When I left him at the beginning of August, I knew he would never go out of my life again.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is there any parallel to this comradeship between two of the most indefatigable, and unrepentantly theoretical, brains in Europe? Voltaire and Mme du Chatelet, Benjamin Constant and Mme de Staël, Shaw and Ellen Terry, do not seem to fit the case at all. What visions of *le dialogue* the association conjures up! I was once assured by a French woman-traveller that she had arrived, exhausted, at some remote locality in the Middle East, on the edge of the Sahara, I think, only to find Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre already installed there, in sun-helmets, and engaged in close and earnest discussion, as if they were still sitting in the Café de Flore. Personal curiosity may be unworthy of the male, but I admit to looking forward with some eagerness to the second volume of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs, which will tell us about this marriage of true minds.

Orwell's Passion

The Road to Wigan Pier. By GEORGE ORWELL. *Secker & Warburg.* 18s.

IN the July issue of *Encounter* T. R. Fyvel pointed out that it is the current fashion to make fun of Orwell. One reason for this, surely, is the reason which led that irritated Athenian to vote for the ostracism of Aristides; he was sick of hearing him called "the Just". And it is perhaps true that Orwell was prematurely canonised. Because he acted what he believed and because he saw through many of the left-wing follies of his time he became, in the years after his death, something a little bit more than human. Yet the fact remains that though he was human to his would-be calloused finger-tips, Orwell *was* a much better man than most of us. We are reminded of this when we re-read his books, just as we are also reminded of the fact that he was a man of damaging and often irritating limitations.

The Road to Wigan Pier was first published in 1937 and was received, as I remember, with obloquy by communists and fellow-travellers, but with enthusiasm by many. The first part, which is a documentary description of his stay in various working-class homes in the north of England, has inevitably dated in some respects. The lists of prices and wages have little meaning now. But we are reminded not only that Orwell was a very good reporter indeed — perhaps the best of his generation — but also that the agonies and heroisms which he describes are a living part of the present day working-class tradition. When we read so many protests about "unreasonable" strikes, restrictive practices and demarcational disputes, it is well to remember that any working man of over thirty can vividly remember the insecurities and plain miseries of life in the Thirties.

What is most interesting about the tone of Orwell's investigation is that it reads like a report brought back by some humane anthropologist who has just returned from studying the conditions of an oppressed tribe in Borneo. Orwell's constant assumption is that his readers will be amazed and horrified to find out how the English working-classes are living. It must be said that this is partly due to a habit of mind in the author himself. He writes — it is the least pleasant side of him — about "nancy poets" and "verminous little lions," and he sees himself too consciously as the tough and honest man who has really found out the truth instead of simply dealing in high-minded abstractions. There is much in this, of course; but it may be a little misleading to a younger generation. When I was at Oxford, from 1935 to 1938, at least a quarter of my Communist friends were of working-class origin; working-class literature was *de rigueur* (most of it sadly inadequate stuff, but as *factual* as could be) and I was not extraordinary in spending parts of my vacation in the Rhondda Valley.

Yet it is true that Orwell's tone is largely justified by the circumstances of the time. To most middle-class people the industrial working-classes were as remote as the pygmies, and the unemployment figures meant nothing at all in human terms. Today the situation has changed at least in this — that there is no longer any excuse for ignorance.

Orwell's relations with the working classes were like some long and pleasurably agonising love-affair. He could never be one with them, and he knew it, but nor could he ever leave them alone. He talked about them continuously, sometimes as if they represented some unattainable perfection, sometimes as if he found them almost unbearably offensive. The contradictions, even in this one book, are colossal. At one moment he praises the working-class attitude to education:

> ... there is not one working-class boy in a thousand who does not pine for the day when he will leave school. He wants to be doing real work, not wasting his time on ridiculous rubbish like history and geography. To the working-class the notion of staying at school till you are nearly grown-up seems merely contemptible and unmanly. ...

And because the beloved adopts this attitude then Orwell himself will jolly well adopt it too — and thereby become the unwitting ally of all those alarmed reactionaries who want to keep the working classes in their places. It is a piece of idiocy which would ruin a book of lesser passion. And it is in the same foolish vein that he denounces middle-class and left-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wing intellectuals for not adopting the table manners of the working classes. "Why should a man who thinks all virtue resides in the proletariat still take such pains to drink his soup silently? It can only be because in his heart he feels that proletarian manners are disgusting."

Orwell should have spoken for himself: at more enlightened moments he realised that he *was* speaking for himself. There were many radicals then, just as there are many today, who neither believe that all virtue resides in the proletariat nor that the proletarian manners are disgusting. It was Orwell who believed both.

But what is so striking and impressive about this book is not the ill-tempered and extremely conventional attacks on the intelligentsia — who as a group are no better and no worse than the proletariat — but the degree to which Orwell understood the real nature of the English social problem and his own strange role in it. This is particularly true of the second half, which is mainly an autobiographical study of this very subject. To a sensitive, affectionate and enquiring man the barriers of class *are* intolerable, as Orwell found them. In essentials we know that *they* are people like ourselves; and what is more they are not drastically removed from us in space. Except in specialised social areas each class is constantly in the physical presence of other classes — in trains and buses, in the streets and at the cinema, in crowds and in villages. Why then should we be kept apart by inessentials?

And the answer is, of course, that the inessentials are not so inessential as all that, for the most important of them are concerned with the tremendous factor of communication. Usage is trivial; table manners are absurd; the question of whether people smell or not never had the obsessive importance which Orwell gave to it, and has almost none today. But the real separation is precisely one of education and consequently of dominant concern. And it is this which makes all the sillier Orwell's deliberately philistine attitude to this vital subject. I am prohibited from real intimacy with an uneducated man — except in moments of extreme common emotion — because all our terms of reference are different. And the real gulf, for a man who has made use of his education, is here and not in any of those external differences of which Orwell made so much.

It is significant that Orwell wrote with particular loathing about working-class intellectuals. They had, in a sense, betrayed him by coming too close, like an adored mistress who suddenly comes down from her pedestal and agrees to go to bed with her lover. His description of this "type" – as if there were only one type – is incredibly vicious and incredibly conventional: he comes close here to joining hands with those who talk of "counter-jumpers" and "little squirts who get too big for their boots." Of course it is true that in those days there was a certain self-consciousness about many working-class intellectuals: in the intellectual world they were still just rare enough to be thought interesting for their origins as much as for their own persons. But this is much less true today — in spite of the pioneering clamour raised by a few among the new army of scholarship boys. In a few more years intellectual England will be a classless society, in so far as its origins are concerned.

Orwell failed to solve the social problem, both in general terms and in the particulars of his own life. But he was more passionately aware of it than any of his contemporaries. And he was aware of it with his heart as well as with his mind. If we ever succeed in breaking down all artificial barriers between us by means of education (a multitude of natural divisions will happily remain), then Orwell's early passion will certainly have played its part in that achievement.

Philip Toynbee

ICE COLD WAR

Oceanographers believe that man is approaching the point where be can try large-scale experiments on the ocean. Not all of them like this prospect; they feel that tinkering with the ocean without sufficient knowledge may be extremely dangerous. They are aghast at the project much discussed by the Russians, of using atomic energy to clear the Arctic Ocean of ice to help Siberian sea transport. . . . The Northern Hemisphere's comparative freedom from continental glaciers is due to Arctic ice. Winds blowing off the Arctic. Ocean are now dry but if the ice were removed, they would become moist, dropping snow on nearby lands. The snow would pack into ice, and glaciers would start creeping south. Once the process was started, it might be impossible to stop before icecaps covered large parts of Europe and the U.S.

TIME *(New York), 6 July*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM THE OTHER SHORE

Bert Brecht's "Alienation"

LIKE some special corked-up bottle floating in on the tide, the magazine from Moscow had a little message for us. We were all wrong about Bert Brecht. (See *Encounter*, December and May: "Brecht's Difficulties" and "Brecht's Missing Verse.") They knew of no difficulties. They never heard of any missing verse. "In a style full of omissions and portentous hints," writes the critic of the Soviet literary monthly, *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Nr. 5, 1959), "*Encounter* tries to prove that Brecht 'vacillated' and very nearly decided to renounce all that he believed in and fought for to his last breath. . . ."

> Brecht's life is an open book. Never did that consistent and implacable fighter for peace, democracy, and socialism give the slightest ground for such assertions. The facts of Brecht's life are so well known that *Encounter* is compelled to mention many of them. Thus, it is reluctantly admitted that "from about 1930 Brecht was a convinced Communist," and adhered to "the doctrine of class struggle"; that at the beginning of the thirties Brecht, like very many German intellectuals, considered the German Communist Party the "only force capable of standing up to the Hitler danger"; that "after the Reichstag fire, he went into exile"; that in emigration "he was one of the co-editors of a literary magazine published in German in Moscow." And then the war was over, and the common enemy, German fascism, was smashed. Germany was split. Some of the artists who had emigrated from Hitler's empire did not return to their homeland. Perhaps this was when Brecht started "vacillating?" No. For Brecht the question of where he should live and work was clear from the beginning. In spite of the tremendous outcry from the reactionaries he went back to his homeland. He joined the toilers of the German Democratic Republic in building a new life. *Encounter* admits, with a sour face, that "in 1948 he returned to Eastern Berlin," and adds that: "the lavish funds put at his disposal by the East German authorities, and the presence of many of the best friends of his youth, must have made this decision much easier."

At the risk of overburdening the new lanes of "cultural exchange," perhaps we should float a little message back of our own. For a life that is an "open book" too many pages appear to be torn out.

Omission 1: After the *Reichstag* fire, Brecht did not go to Soviet Russia (although he had been invited to make his home there). He performed his editorial duties on a German-language magazine then published in Moscow from — Denmark. When he left Europe in 1941 he went to the U.S.S.R., but went right on. From Vladivostok he embarked for California.

Omission 2: He may have "joined the toilers" in Eastern Germany, but obviously not at the queue in the local bank. When Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize, he deposited a large part of it in his Swiss account (to the consternation of Party stalwarts). Nor did he choose to share citizenship with the neighbouring toilers; he applied for, and received Austrian nationality, and did his travelling with a passport issued in Salzburg. The copyright of his works he granted to a West-German publisher (the late Peter Suhrkamp of Frankfurt-am-Main).

Omission 3: Brecht's most real and most difficult "difficulties" were with the East-German Communist censorship. Many of his *Meisterschueler* in his Berlin theatre were arrested and imprisoned. (One young man, whom we later met in the West, continued, behind bars, to write poetry; and Brecht continued to make corrections, sent the poems back to the cell, and from time to time arranged for their anonymous publication. "My fees," the young poet told us, "were deposited for me secretly in a blocked account. For Brecht the literary life had always to go on! . . .") Brecht was close to the group of Wolfgang Harich, the unorthodox Marxist philosopher, who is still in jail. Shortly before his death (in 1956) Brecht was involved with "revisionism," and was translating from the Polish Adam Wazyk's *Poem for Adults.*

> What "arguments" [*Inostrannaya Literatura* asks] do these critics adduce to prove the theory of Brecht's "vacillations?" As we said above, this is where the style of evasions, omissions and innuendos comes into its own, copiously larded with shameless lies. . . .
>
> The main "argument" used by Brecht's slanderers is his last poems, dated 1953 and not published in his lifetime.

The truth of his orthodoxy is apparently established by some quotes of their own from the special Brecht issue of *Sinn und Form* (published in East Berlin in 1957). But it was from these very pages that we cited those remarkable lines of "Evil Morning," and if there is "innuendo" here it is not ours but Brecht's —

Last night in my dream I saw fingers pointed
As at a leper. They were calloused [at me
And broken.
You dont't know! I cried
Guiltily.

If, according to the Moscow critic, "Brecht did not and could not find himself in disagreement with a socialist society," then we await a more proper ideological explanation of "*Unwissende! schrie ich / Schuldbewußt . . .*," tortured lines which (for us) are associated with Brecht's uneasiness and sense of guilt about the East German uprising of 17 June 1953. It all has the note of a genuine Brechtian irony: the author of *Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit* and the father of the *Verfremdungseffekt* had come to know the "difficulties" and the "alienation" himself.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Bankole Timothy Replies

MR. CECIL KING [ENCOUNTER, June, p. 92] has every right to defend his business interests in Ghana but in doing so he makes references to me.

Peregrine Worsthorne was wrong in referring to me in your May issue as "principal leader writer" of the *Ghana Daily Graphic*, but Mr. Cecil King was equally wrong in stating in his letter in your June issue that I was "a feature writer" on the *Graphic*. Here are the facts: during the years I worked on the *Graphic*, *i.e.*, from 1951–57, there was no "leader writer" or "principal leader writer." The editorials were written by different people including Therson-Cofie, Francis King (Mr. Cecil King's son), Moses Danquah, Paul Sogbodor, David Williams (the editorial director in London), and I also wrote a considerable number, cuttings of which I have in my possession.

I was first appointed in London to the *Daily Graphic* staff in 1951 as Assistant Editor; in 1955 I was appointed Executive Assistant Editor, and in 1956, Deputy Editor. Owing to the poor quality of the editorial staff at the time I joined the *Graphic*, I had to do various duties including reporting, feature writing, writing leaders, writing women's features and even proof-reading. It is also true that I introduced a number of features into the *Daily Graphic* and the *Sunday Mirror* such as book reviews, international commentary, profiles spotlight on various towns in Ghana, etc., and a column under my own name which was very popular and contributed to the success of the paper. I also introduced daily editorial conferences over which I presided. In fact, there were times when I had to write three or four articles in a single issue of the *Graphic*. These cuttings are also in my possession. Letters praising my "excellent work" have been written to me both by Mr. Cecil King and his son, and I have these letters here with me in London.

Mr. Cecil King in his letter also states that I was deported from Ghana for political activities outside office hours. Suffice it to say that I have never in my life belonged to any political party or organisation, nor have I spoken on any political platform. In Ghana, I belonged to the Press Club (a professional body) and the International Club—a social club where Europeans and Africans met in a friendly way for a drink and a chat. Besides, while I was on the staff of the *Daily Graphic*, I attended the office every day of the week and this did not leave much time for extra-mural activities. The only activities in which I engaged outside office hours were an occasional game of tennis with my former colleague, Henry Ofori, who wrote under the name of Carl Mutt, and addressing, on invitation, schools and organisations like Achimota, Mfantsipim, Odumase Secondary, the Cape Coast Dining Club, and the School of Social Welfare on subjects like "The Press and Our Society," "The Press, the Politicians, and the Public," and "Freedom of the Press." And all these public lectures helped in publicising the *Graphic*.

If these activities are regarded as "political," then I am guilty. But it is well to remember that all of the people cannot be fooled all of the time, and history will judge.

BANKOLE TIMOTHY

London

Pasternak and Wilson

THERE is usually no difficulty in finding what you are determined to find in a work of art; perhaps this is one of its main characteristics—a work of art gives scope to individual interpretation, and each onlooker can see in it what best satisfies his own imagination.

When Leonid Pasternak's first large canvas "Letter from Home" was acquired by the Tretiakov Gallery, a young critic went out of his way to describe the beauty of construction, to explain the motives for which this or that object was put in this or that particular place, and to show how carefully the artist had calculated and planned the effects of light and shade, the contrasts, the squares, the intersecting lines, etc., etc. Undoubtedly this was a very clever and expert analysis of the painting! Yet my father was greatly amused by it: he himself had no idea that he had done these things at all; he had just painted the scene as he saw it, and as he liked it best. And this is what artists usually do.

The same attitude of "critics know best" is revealed in Boris Pasternak's *Essay in Autobiography*, in the chapter on Tolstoy's death, where he speaks of Pushkin and his critics; and again, in one of his poems about Blok, my brother writes:

> *The most influential of nitwits,*
> *The sycophant toadies alone*
> *Can tell who should live and be lauded*
> *And who should be dead and unknown.*
>
> *So no one perhaps would be certain*
> *— Is Pushkin a poet, or not —*
> *Without their elaborate theses*
> *Explaining to us what is what.*

Since the publication of *Dr. Zhivago* scores of articles have been written or broadcast about the book, each of the reviewers trying to outdo the previous ones on what he or she was able to discover in it—or, more often, to read into it. Though I disagreed with quite a few of them, I did not feel compelled to argue about them, but Edmund Wilson's "Legend and Symbol in *Dr. Zhivago*" [ENCOUNTER, June] is too important to be ignored.

Boris Pasternak is essentially a realist, and though he may see and describe reality in an unorthodox, impressionist way, not immediately obvious to all

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his readers, I think it is wrong to suppose that he would purposely, in order to provide his public with a guessing game, try to obscure what he wants to reveal. Surely, just the opposite is characteristic of his personality and his writings!—they are both completely open and outspoken, perhaps too outspoken at times. Mr. Wilson's article makes fascinating reading, and is written so convincingly that it would be difficult not to agree with much of what he has to say; yet I take exception to his main premise, namely, that "the poetic symbolism" (which pervades *Dr. Zhivago*) "has been planned and plotted by the author." In my opinion, this symbolism or mysticism, these connections and parallels, if indeed they exist in *Dr. Zhivago*, have not been plotted and planned, but have crept in of their own accord, as it were, unpremeditated, like the contrasting squares and colours in my father's picture, with the author hardly conscious of them and of their implications. The Moscow street-names, for instance, are all real and in the right places; that whole district round Arbat is very near to where we used to live, and where some of the prototypes of his characters actually lived; no Muscovite would connect these names with their original meanings—they have become quite commonplace with usage.

The observations about Zhivago, Yury, Lara, and Evgraf, and all the ensuing conclusions and parallels are very interesting indeed (though I wonder why no one so far has mentioned the very beginning of Evgraf's appearance in the novel, namely in Zhivago's talk with Anna Ivanovna shortly before her death; this passage seems to me very significant for the further development of the guardian-angel theme).

But Mr. Wilson—or rather Mrs. Lehovich—is really going too far when she tries to connect Hamlet with "Moreau and Vetchinkin." Is it at all conceivable that Pasternak should want to reduce his beloved Hamlet to a small quantity of boiled bacon?! And what for? Just in order to let mystically-inspired, wide-eyed enthusiasts pick yet one more "symbol," like a mushroom, and triumphantly place it in their already overflowing symbolic baskets? ... I doubt it.

LYDIA SLATER

Oxford

Three Authors Reply

THE EXPERT battering I have received—albeit, in some cases, with some pretty blunt instruments—has left some fairly visible dents in the thesis I put forward in my Ghana article [ENCOUNTER, May], although, as far as I can see, its central tenets have escaped unscathed. The dents do not surprise me. I am well aware that impressions received during a short visit are bound to be open to detailed criticism by experts who have given many years of study to the particular country concerned. What I tried to do in my piece—which was billed purposefully as "impressionistic"—was to pierce below the crust of expert orthodoxy a little nearer to the heart of the matter. This is always a risky venture, but if journalists do not occasionally make the attempt, who else will? I had hoped that any would-be visitor to Ghana would get a truer picture of the realities than he would by reading the mass of authoritative documentation put out in the past by those very African experts who have leapt to my attack.

At the risk of being impertinent I would also like to suggest that my critics, who are clearly used to concentrating on the immediate minutiae of their subject, are temperamentally incapable of appreciating the virtue of a panoramic view. Mr Hatch, for example, contemptuously dismisses my argument that the British are culpable for grafting unsuitable parliamentary institutions on to the Ghanaian body politic by saying: "Everyone who has even a nodding acquaintance with the progress of events in Ghana over the past 10 years would know it was the Coussey *All-African* Commission which originally proposed the general framework of Parliamentary democracy for the country." In does not seem to have occurred to him that I was talking about the last 100 years rather than the last ten. I was taking issue, not with recent policies but with the historic assumption of British imperialism—that it is possible to export parliamentary Government to Africa. To retort, therefore, as Mr Hatch does, that the Ghanaians chose this system and did not have it forced upon them by the British, is wholly irrelevant. Of course, *in the end*, they chose it. But who taught them so to choose?

Again, several other critics appear to be astonished by my suggestion that the Commonwealth will be put to intolerable strains by the inherent conflicts between the various West African States struggling for supremacy. They laugh to scorn the idea that Ghana and Nigeria might ever be involved in armed conflict. Such forebodings may seem "mysterious" or "ridiculous" today, just as at the time of the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire it would have seemed mysterious and ridiculous to predict that rising nationalism in Europe would take the destructive and suicidal forms which it actually did. One critic goes to the ludicrous extent of describing my prophecy as "inaccurate," as if I had been commenting on what was in Dr Nkrumah's out-tray for action the next day, rather than on long-term trends which seem to me inherent in the situation as a whole.

Another example of this tendency to judge what

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I wrote as if it was an inter-departmental minute for immediate action—rather than a piece of journalistic reflection—is the letter from Mr Peters, who takes issue with my contention that British officials, by continuing to serve the Ghana Government, are unintentionally distorting the country's natural political development. He is, of course, perfectly correct in stating that even if the British did withdraw, other White men—Americans or even Russians—would probably take their place, which might make the situation worse rather than better. This is certainly a valid practical objection to the point I was making. But it does not reduce the value of what seemed to me original insight: namely, that so long as the political executive remains the only all-Black organ of Government other institutions—the judiciary, civil services, etc—will find it difficult to gain the strength and status which a healthy democracy requires that they should.

It seems to me, therefore, that although much of what my critics say is true, their contributions are for the most part useful footnote qualifications of my basic theses. Where I tended to look too far ahead, or too far behind, they usefully fill in the immediate foreground and background of the picture; where I looked for something new to say they rightly point out that I have failed to say many old things—and say them for me. The one exception I make to this somewhat patronising conclusion is the letter of Mr Aduma-Bossman. His is an original contribution which I respect too much to attempt a reply within the brief space available here and now.

May I, in conclusion, make one personal rejoinder to those of my critics who seem more concerned with discrediting my motives than my arguments, hoping presumably that by doing the former—which is always easy—they can give the impression of having done the latter as well. With this end in view they slyly suggest that only a colour-prejudiced reactionary would choose to pick on Ghana when there are so many other more worthy white targets to attack, like, for example, South Africa. It is also suggested that my impressions of Ghana were distorted because I am "a frustrated imperialist," "a stern, unbending Tory," "a sub-conscious racialist," suffer from "intellectual aversion to colour" and believe in "an autocratic political philosophy." This is silly. I wrote about Ghana because I happened to be there—and not in South Africa or Pakistan. It is surely not necessary to point out everything that is going wrong everywhere in the Commonwealth before one can be permitted in good faith to comment on dangers in one particular part. I would not think of implying that Messrs Hatch, Legum and Howe were sub-conscious anti-whites, because they may have criticised South Africa without mentioning Ghana; or that their defence of Ghana sprang from "frustrated anti-imperialism," or that their unwillingness to speak frankly about the threats to democracy in Ghana is just one more example of socialist ambivalence to dictatorship when it happens to have a left-wing bias. I only wish they would be as prepared to accept my good faith as I am to accept theirs.

PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE

London

SITTING ON A FORTUNE [ENCOUNTER, May] brought a good bag of letters, anyhow. Several correspondents say that there should be a full survey and that my conclusions, such as they were, are not enough to go on. I entirely agree. There have in fact been some surveys in different countries—for instance, much of what I said about ponces, I discovered after the article came out, was said in a book published in England in 1916 called *Downward Paths*. Most surveys give the same sort of picture, but get little publicity while the "respectable" press continues to treat the subject of prostitution like a hot coal, and the "gutter press" prefers to go on exploiting prurience and what Kenneth Tynan calls "the Englishman's view that sex is something fascinatingly horrific." *Viz.*, the *News of the World's* recent life-story of the Messina girl Edna Kalman. This woman was so much exploited and subjugated by her brutal ponce that the first thing she did when he was put inside for two years was wait around till he came out again.

Sitting on a Fortune was quoted by Lord Pethick-Lawrence in the Committee stage of the Street Offences Bill in the House of Lords. He used it in the course of a plea that a distinction should be made between ponces who were in effect no more than the husbands of prostitutes, and those who would be shown to be exploiting several girls in a strictly commercial operation. The former should not receive such severe sentences as the latter. The Lord Chancellor promised to look into the matter, but held out little hope of being able to make this distinction. It would indeed be a difficult distinction to make in statute law, and one can only hope that magistrates and judges will make it when they come to pass sentence. The seven-year imprisonment which is the new maximum will, one hopes, be regarded strictly as a maximum.

And now for "T.T.". Can you hear me, T.T.? I have asked the editor who you are, but he won't tell me, because your anonymity "is due apparently to the fact that his name and the letter might reflect on his character if it were known that he was all that flippant about sex...." I don't know about that, but I wish you had had the forthrightness to sign your letter. As it is, I find it hard to know what is the etiquette when someone calls me by my Christian name through the keyhole of anonymity, and makes jokes about my private life. They were good jokes—and I plead guilty to smugness; at least to the smugness of signing what I write.

WAYLAND YOUNG

London

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SEVERAL PEOPLE have been so kind as to write that they more or less agreed with what I said in my essay *Perish by the Sword* [ENCOUNTER, May]. But there was one rather disturbing letter: Mr. B. A. Young, while he too agrees with much of what I say, seems to think that the state of affairs thus revealed is tolerable and even desirable. That I should find it sinister is apparently evidence of "a whacking great trauma about Army officers," which is in turn to be attributed to the circumstances of my resignation.

Now, I certainly have got a "whacking great trauma," or at any rate an out-size *thing* about Army officers—but as I pointed out in my essay, there was no one to blame for this but myself; and I might add here that I was treated at the time with sympathy and practical kindness beyond anything which I had either right or reason to expect. No: the cause must be sought elsewhere.

I was concerned to demonstrate in my essay that young officers are now being trained to assume the right of command, not by reason of birth or social position, nor yet as the consequence of having absorbed professional knowledge, but simply because they have been selected as people who will respond well to certain moral stimuli—who will be capable, that is, of believing in and acting upon such morally primed catchwords as guts, initiative, responsibility, etc. From this it follows that young officers are now conscious of themselves as belonging, not to a social élite, but to a hand-picked moral élite, membership of which confers the right to dominate inferior moral orders. This, I concluded, was a sinister and even dangerous state of affairs.

Mr. Young, on the other hand, having agreed in principle with my contention, then plausibly urges that guts, initiative, etc., are necessary qualities in a leader, that the Army has got to provide its officers with some sanction or other on which to base their authority, and that since birth is no longer an acceptable sanction the sanction of moral superiority will do very well as a substitute. And of course, there is a certain amount in this: if we must have an Army, then it must be properly run; and if this new principle of "moral authority" works all right in practice, then what, says Mr. Young, have we got to complain about?

This, of course, is the stage at which I start getting "traumatic," because it seems to me that we have a great deal, not so much to complain about, as to worry about. It is not, as Mr. Young implies, merely a question of a superior intellectual figure, getting into a tantrum because Generals don't know about Art or Colonels are keen about Rugger. It is something far more depressing than that.

1. People who base their authority on *moral* excellence are apt to assume that it must, of its nature, be universal. Moral authority implies the right, not just to command soldiers, but to start bossing anyone who is, or appears to be, morally inferior. Observe the attitudes and expressions of young officers on leave when they see something of which they disapprove. . . .

2. On the whole officers who used to claim authority by *right of birth* were so accustomed to the idea, having been brought up to it all their lives and were often so preoccupied by other interests (mistresses, estates, gambling, big game), that they did not bother to exert their authority except in order to ensure a minimum of local control. But officers who claim authority on *moral* grounds seldom, nowadays, have the money for outside distractions, and are (which is far worse) very much in the nature of converts; they have not, that is to say, been brought up from the cradle to exercise command, but have been suddenly presented with this right as something new and exciting which is due to them because of the excellence of their characters. Converts are usually more tiresome, interfering, and even fanatical than those who are born in a faith; and it is therefore arguable that "officer converts" of the type I have described might develop considerable nuisance value, whether inside or outside the Army, before many more years elapse.

3. The English are much impressed by moral sanctions, whether these operate in their own favour or in someone else's.

4. It follows that the current type of young officer (though admittedly still largely an unknown entity) might later have a disrupting, uncivilising, and altogether deleterious effect on the nation as a whole: for such men are apt to dislike very strongly the vague mixture of sloth, liberalism, petty corruption, cultural freedom and political time-serving, which informs (beneficially, on the whole) the affairs of this country; and indeed such men might even be capable, in an extreme case of disaffection or moral disapproval, of organising military revolution. I think it would require very extreme circumstances indeed to set this off; the fact remains that it is, or so I would maintain, just possible. The old type of officer, on the other hand, was much too detached and self-sufficient and preoccupied with his own expensive amusements ever to dream of such a thing.

5. A purely personal reflection. Many of my own friends have been, and are, drawn from among such young officers. It is distasteful when one's friends strike violent moral attitudes; and even more distasteful to reflect that during one's time in the Army some of the iron has probably entered one's own soul. Even now, having had no official connection with the Regular Army for some considerable time, I find myself glaring with anger at private soldiers who are walking in the street with their hands in their pockets. Why can't I mind my own business? Why indeed?

SIMON RAVEN

London

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHORS

Paul Ignotus, who has just completed his autobiography, *Political Prisoner* (to be published by Routledge & Kegan Paul), writes: "I had always been impressed by the brave cowardice of Erasmus who was glad to waive the honour of heroism to the professionals of killing and dying, and never hesitated to run away from any spot endangered by epidemics or religious zeal. He admitted he wished to save his skin, and acted accordingly. I admitted I wished to imitate him, and imitated Don Quixote. ... Broils and conflicts made me a refugee in my own country. On the eve of the second World War, I sought refuge in Britain. When in the summer of 1949, as the London Press Attaché, I returned to Budapest to report to the Government, I knew that I was asking for trouble, perhaps for death. But I was caught by commitments, family ties, political theories, loyalties and fear. Again, I could not help fearing the gesture of retreat more than the foreseeable costs of an adventure. ... And so my life turned into a melodrama proper, with the characteristic features of the period: arrest by the police, brainwashing, torture, fake trial, prison, etc. ... Much has by now been told about all this, and a great deal most competently. Looking through my recollections, now in proofs on my desk, I wonder whether I have added anything to what others said. Authentic testimonies, even on important matters, can sound boring and hollow. Sincerity is often a poor excuse. ... And how much more easily, even expressively, I could have told the story in Hungarian! I wrote with a constant sigh. Insufficient familiarity with a language may often compel the writer to face his subject more rigorously, to do away with pleasing obscurities. It may teach him to give up art for economy, sometimes the best method of approaching the truth. ..."

Of **Henry Fairlie** (age 35; columnist on the *Daily Mail;* educated at Corpus Christi, Oxford; married; three children) R. H. S. Crossman has recently written: "If it is the Establishment that makes young men angry, Henry Fairlie can claim to be the first of his generation to look back in anger. Not that there was anything new about his sense of frustration. In normal times a complacent and wealthy oligarchy has run this country — at least since the Tudor epoch — and, while the vast majority accept this as natural, up-and-coming young men have always either denounced it as corruption of the noble past or called for its liquidation on the way to an even nobler future. No, Mr. Fairlie's originality lay in his observation that democracy, since we acquired it, is making us not more democratic but less free. Instead of creating an equalitarian society, it is replacing the old traditional ruling class by a new kind of oligarchy — the mid-twentieth-century Establishment, which is less liberal and a great deal more tightly knit than anything which preceded it. ..."

Colin MacInnes is the author of *City of Spades* and his new novel *Absolute Beginners* will shortly be published by MacGibbon and Kee. ...

A. J. P. Taylor, the Oxford historian, contributed a portrait of the city of Manchester to *Encounter's* "World's Cities" series, in March 1957.

F. R. Allemann is a well-known Swiss journalist who has written an authoritative volume on post-war German politics.

Alfred Fabre-Luce, whose "chronicles" have been widely read *(Journal de la France),* contributes frequently to the *N. R. F.* and *Le Monde.*

J. G. Weightman is a member of London University. In the January *Encounter* we published his critique of "Mauriac, the Witness."

Philip Toynbee, critic, novelist, and journalist, is on the staff of *The Observer.*

Hilary Corke has recently published much verse in *The New Yorker* and is the current Television Critic for *The Listener.*

Notice to Readers

Owing to the recent six-week printing strike in Britain, it proved impossible to publish this issue at the usual time. We apologise to readers for the unavoidable delay, and to advertisers whose announcements could not be accommodated.

We expect to publish the September issue early in September and thereafter to revert to our normal publication schedule.

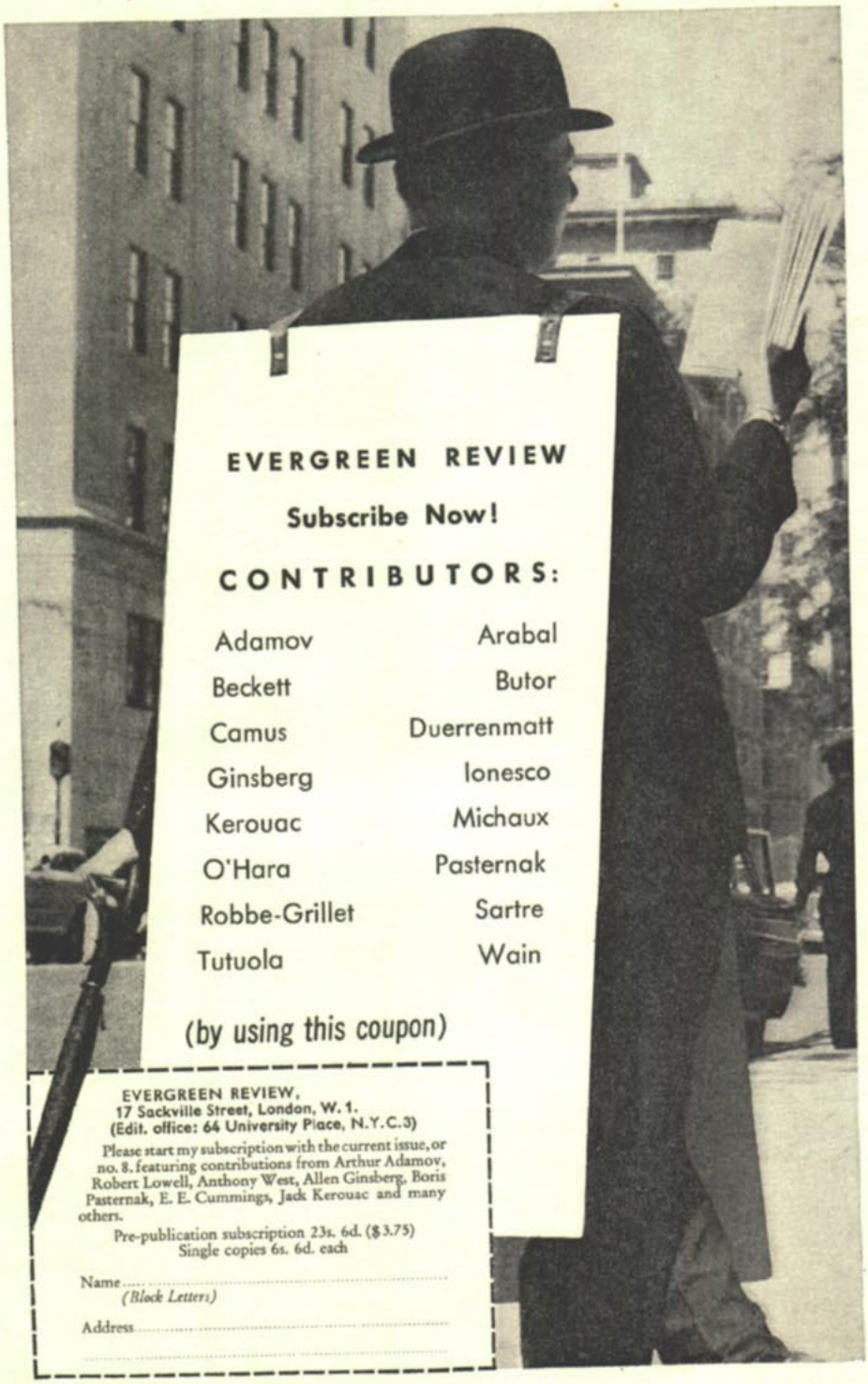
The editorial and business offices of ENCOUNTER are at 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1. A stamped addressed envelope (English stamp) or international reply coupons should accompany MSS, otherwise they cannot be returned. For subscription details please see page 1.

ENCOUNTER is published by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 7 John Street, Bloomsbury, W.C.1, for THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM, 104 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris 8, France. PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Denis de Rougemont. SECRETARY-GENERAL: Nicolas Nabokov.

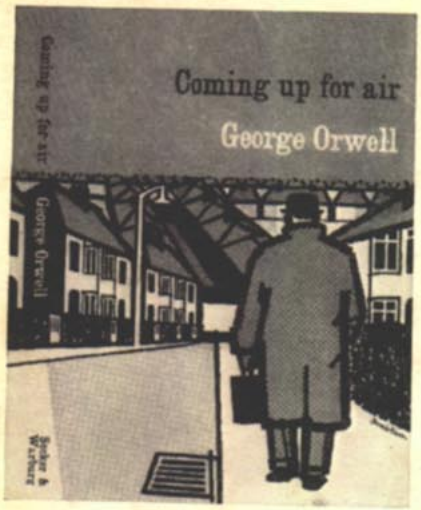
The views expressed in the pages of ENCOUNTER *are to be attributed to the writers, not to the sponsors*

MADE AND PRINTED IN GERMANY BY BRÜDER HARTMANN, BERLIN-SCHÖNEBERG

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



New Uniform Edition of ★ GEORGE ORWELL

In process of re-issue

Animal Farm 6s. and 10s. 6d. (*illus.*)

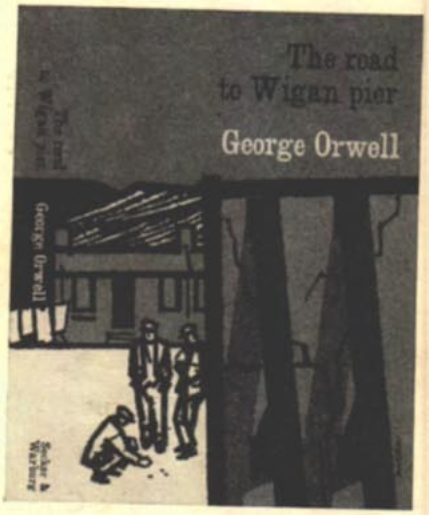
Burmese Days 12s. 6d.

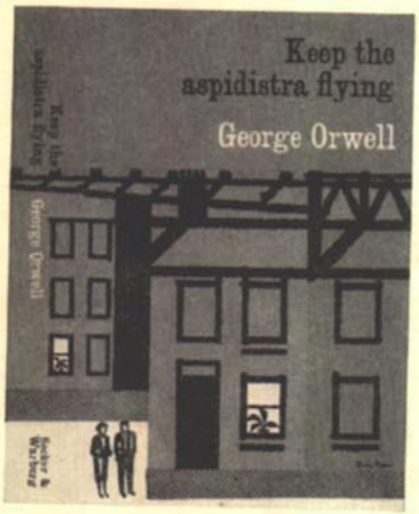
Coming up for Air 16s.

Critical Essays 12s. 6d.

Down and Out in Paris and London 12s. 6d.

The Road to Wigan Pier 18s.





England your England 12s. 6d.

Homage to Catalonia 12s. 6d.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying 18s.

Nineteen Eighty-Four 15s.

Shooting an Elephant
(*Temporarily out of print*)

Secker & Warburg

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED